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Sea Island Cascades: An Analysis of Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions of Factors Related to The Overrepresentation of African American Males Identified as Having an Emotional Disability

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SEA ISLAND CASCADES: AN ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS RELATED TO THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IDENTIFIED AS HAVING
AN EMOTIONAL DISABILITY

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DEDICATION

Don't you set down on the steps

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.

Don't you fall now—

For I'se still goin', honey,

I'se still climbin',

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair

(Langston Hughes, "*Mother to Son*").

This dissertation journey would never have been completed without the love of my family and friends. Each time I felt the path of late night research and writing become increasingly difficult, my beautiful children, Malik and Kaylah, remained my motivation. My children are an abundant gift from God and I am so thankful to have completed this journey so that I can help build their foundation to succeed in this world. I am very thankful for my parents, John and Sarah Bryant, who gave me all of the necessary tools to chisel away the gates called obstacles and to construct monuments of determination and perseverance. I am also grateful for my sisters and brothers (John, Antoinette, Cathy, Michael, Myria, and Zack) who provide me with continuous love and care. My spiritual coaches, Brother Dallas and Sister Janie Wilson, and Brenda Armstrong, as well as my entire church family, made sure that I was fueled with His daily bread to prevent my faith from depleting when my journey became tumultuous. During

my dissertation journey, I experienced some significant trials; I really have to thank my close friend, Coakley Hilton, for his encouragement and support. Most importantly, Coakley edifies a point that one's impact on life is strictly aligned with one's relationship with God. He is a living example of the poem, *Anyway*, written by Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centered;
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;
Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;
It was never between you and them anyway.

This entire manuscript is dedicated to my beautiful, encouraging, courageous and dear friend, Dr. Ibis Glass.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have to give high fives to Margaret Pilkington and Chad Counts! My Department of Exceptional Children Services coordinators and support staff is an awesome team! I truly appreciate all that they do to ensure quality programs for our students with disabilities, which makes my job a joy! A special thank you goes to my dissertation committee. I am proud of their leadership and support during this journey and the extra time that Zach Kelehear and Mitch Yell took to edit my manuscript.

ABSTRACT

The issue of the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education is a persistent concern that has negatively impacted African American male students, their families, school districts, and the field of special education. School districts throughout the nation report a higher representation of African American males in special education programs than their presence in the general education environment would predict. In South Carolina, 42.5 % of African Americans receive special education services whereas 53% are categorized as having an emotional disturbance (ED). Of the 53% of the African Americans categorized as ED, 79% are males. In the Charleston County School District, African American students represent 44 % of the school district's enrollment and 55% of this enrollment receives special education services. Of the students who are defined within the category of emotional disability, 70% are African Americans. The purpose of this study is to examine how African American male students with special needs are perceived within their educational environment by elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers in the school district of Charleston, South Carolina. The following research questions will guide this study.

Research Question One

How do educators and administrators perceive the affect of the following factors on the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED:

1. Environmental factors

2. Teacher perception
3. School related variables

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED?

Research Question Three

Is there a difference in educators' and administrators' perceptions of overrepresentation based on the following demographic characteristics:

- a. race (Caucasian vs. other)
- b. training on how to refer students to special education services
- c. training to identify ED characteristics
- d. years of experience.

The population for this study consisted of all individuals identified as active elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers of the Charleston County School District in South Carolina. Participants were invited to complete the Gresham Survey designed to quantitatively assess the perceptions of general educators about the overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identified as having an ED under the IDEA.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The medical definition of cascade means “a molecular, biochemical, or physiological process occurring in a succession of stages each of which is closely related to or depends on the output of the previous stage” (American Heritage Dictionary, n.d.). The issue of the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education is similar to the series in a cascade because it is a persistent and long-standing concern that has negatively impacted African American students, their families, school districts, the field of special education, and ultimately, the nation as a whole (Patton, 1998; Dunn, 1968). Researchers contend that the decision made in the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954), provided parents and advocates a platform by which to seek educational equality for students with disabilities but it was not the case for African American students with disabilities.

The Brown decision provided advocates and parents of students with disabilities a legal precedent for challenging the educational inequities that children with disabilities experienced. Prior to court order desegregation, African American students with disabilities, in particular those with mild disabilities, often attended segregated Black schools with their brothers, sisters, and neighbors without disabilities. Advocates of special education fought to develop special education programs because general education was often not inclusive of students with disabilities and, as such, was not meeting their educational needs. The challenges to the existing segregated educational system came on the heels of the Brown decision in the form of several well-known court

cases including *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972), and *Mills v. the District of Columbia* (1972). The rulings in these cases established separate schools for students with disabilities as unconstitutional and paved the way for the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, currently known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). (Blanchett, 2009, p. 374-375)

The intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. Despite the fact that “the field of special education was formed on the heels of the *Brown* decision...” FAPE for all developed into a resurgence of segregation for African American students with disabilities (Blanchett, 2006, p. 24). As a result, the problem with the overrepresentation of African American students in special education is a persistent reality. Ironically, students of color have not been the beneficiaries of the *Brown* legacy (Boone & King-Berry, 2007). Indeed the problem of overrepresentation of African American males in special education programs has generated a great deal of research and much discussion as to its causal factors (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Of the many factors identified in the literature, belief systems, especially among educators and its impact on their ability to contribute or solve the problem, has not been addressed to any great extent. With respect to overrepresentation of elementary-aged African American males qualifying for the category of emotional disability (ED), previous research does not address overrepresentation at a local level. The research did not use a sociopolitical and historical perspective to examine elementary school general educators’ beliefs. In particular, their beliefs about the causal factors for the incidence of overrepresentation for this segment of society have not been examined.

The aim of this study is to unravel the challenges faced by educators to educate African American students, and in order to do so, their biases and stereotypes must be revealed so that cultural differences are not defined as deficits. It is postulated that these preconceptions often lead to lowered expectations that ultimately place an overwhelming amount of African American males in special education programs.

Statement of the Problem

The United States Department of Education (2011) reported that the resident population for students ages 6-21 who attended public schools was 7.8 million. Of the 6.5 million children receiving special education services, approximately 2.7 million were of elementary age (age 6-11). The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 30th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reported that the largest disability category among students ages 6 through 21 served under *IDEA*, Part B, was *specific learning disabilities* (44.6 %). The next most common disability category was *speech or language impairments* (19.1 %), followed by *other health impairments* (9.9 %), *intellectual disabilities* (8.6 %) and *emotional disturbance* (7.5 %). *Emotional disturbance* was among the five most prevalent disability categories for all racial/ethnic groups except Asian/Pacific Islander. “Other environments” accounted for less than 7% of the students within each racial/ethnic group. Compared to other racial/ethnic groups, black (not Hispanic) students had a larger percentage associated with “Other environments,” at 6.4%. (See Table 1.1)

The Data Accountability Center reported that in 2011 a total of 9.7 million African Americans students enrolled in public education ages 6-21. The 30th Annual Report to Congress indicated that 20.58 % of African American students received special education

Table 1.1

Number of students ages 6 through 21 served under IDEA, Part B, and percentage of the population served, by year: Fall 1997 through fall 2006

Year	Total served under Part B (ages 6 through 21)		Population ages 6 through 21 in the 50 states and DC	Percentage of the population ages 6 through 21 served under Part B in the 50 states, DC and BIE schools
	For the 50 states, DC, BIE schools, PR and the four outlying areas	For the 50 states, DC and BIE schools		
1997	5,401,292	5,343,017	62,552,035	8.5
1998	5,541,166	5,488,001	63,763,580	8.6
1999	5,683,707	5,613,949	64,717,510	8.7
2000	5,775,722	5,705,177	65,323,415	8.7
2001	5,867,078	5,795,334	65,696,458	8.8
2002	5,959,282	5,893,038	65,845,492	8.9
2003	6,046,051	5,971,495	65,865,048	9.1
2004	6,118,437	6,033,425	65,871,265	9.2
2005	6,109,569	6,021,462	65,825,834	9.1
2006	6,081,890	5,986,644	66,002,955	9.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), OMB #1820-0043: "Report of Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Under Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, as Amended," 1997–2006.

services in the United States. It was also reported that 28.79 % of that population were served as students with an emotional disturbance while the more somber fact is that African American students only account for 15 % of the total student population in the United States. (Table 1.2)

In South Carolina, 42.5 % of African Americans receive special education services. Of these students being served in special education 53% are categorized as having an emotional disturbance. Of the 53% of the African Americans categorized as ED, 79% are males (Child Count, 2011 South Carolina Summary).

The demographics below related to overrepresentation all share a common theme or that the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education, especially males, is an ever-increasing problem in the United States (Irving & Hudley, 2008). A number of researchers have attempted to address the problem. For example Waitoller,

Table 1.2.

Child Count, 2011 South Carolina Summary 3-21

Includes all students receiving special education and related services through South Carolina School Districts and State Operated Programs that receive IDEA funding.

	Hispanic Latino		American Indian or Alaskan		Asian		Black or African American		Hawaiian or Pacific Islander		White		Two Or More Races		Shown Total
Primary Disability	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Intellectual Impairment	110	125	*	17	20	41	1818	2915	*	*	1002	1467	35	54	7604
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	35	52	*	*	11	18	215	266			244	283	11	16	1151
Speech or Language Impairment	396	809	21	45	73	123	2268	4886	*	*	4100	7993	200	378	21292
Visual Impairment	10	*	*	*	*	*	69	82			115	152	*	*	428
Emotional Disability	12	54	*	*	*	*	325	1290		*	229	1044	11	78	3043
Orthopedic Impairment	18	24		*	*	*	94	130			162	229	*	*	657
Other Health Impairment	84	199	*	24	11	25	1011	2662	*	*	1918	4300	74	187	10495
Specific Learning Disability	750	1517	57	122	52	94	5922	13027	*	10	6452	13144	329	536	42012
Deaf blindness							*				*	*			0
Multiple Disabilities	23	24	*	*	*	*	77	124		*	170	285	*	10	713
Autism	32	175	*	*	*	69	240	1382		*	375	2064	16	88	4441
Traumatic Brain Injury	*	*					29	44			35	70	*	*	178
Developmental Delay	147	420	*	*	18	44	1029	2441	*	*	878	2211	74	161	7423
Shown Total	1617	3399	78	208	185	414	13097	29249	0	10	15680	33242	750	1508	99437
Actual Total															99624

* Subgroups of less than 10 students are suppressed which may result in shown totals that are less an actuals.

Artiles, & Cheney (2010), found that 405 articles on overrepresentation had been published between 1968 and 2006. Even more startling is the prevalence of African American males identified as having an emotional disturbance in special education. Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons & Feggins-Azziz (2006) found that African American males are not only overrepresented in the ED category but they tend to be placed in more restrictive settings and underrepresented in less restrictive educational environments when compared to other peers with the same disabilities.

Table 1.3.

Percentage of students ages 6 through 21 served under IDEA, Part B, by race/ethnicity and disability category: Fall 2006

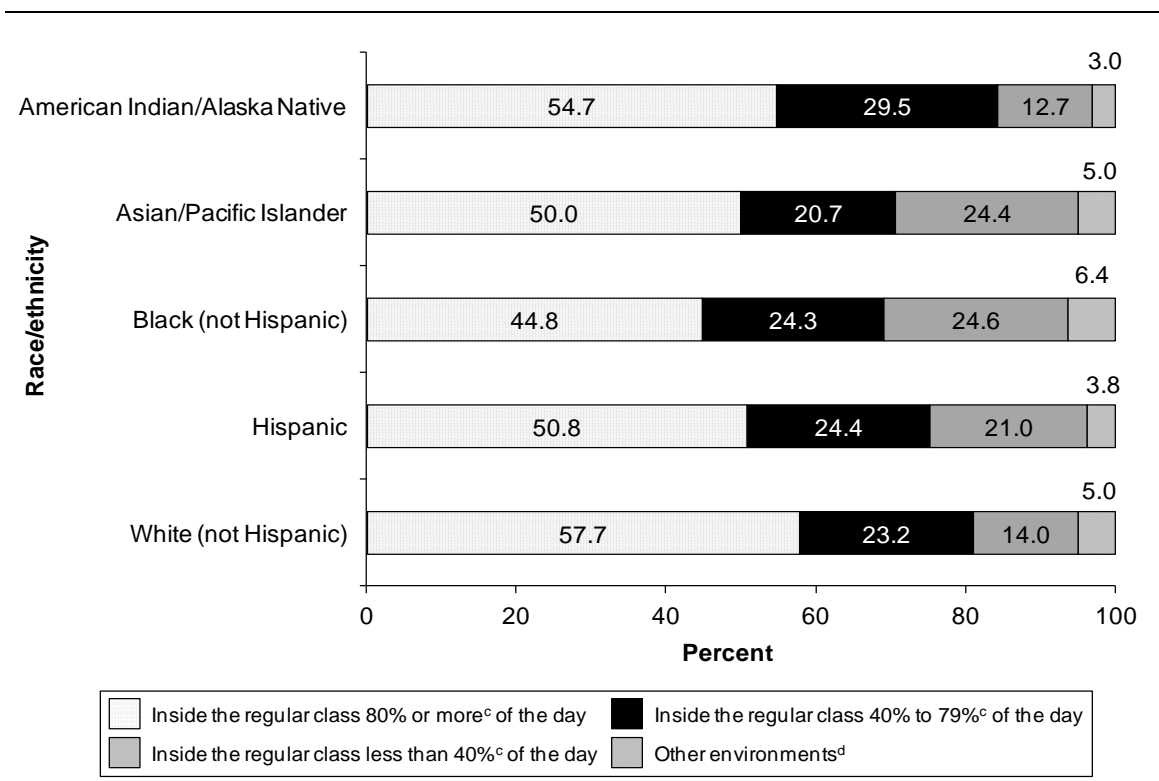
Disability	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black (not Hispanic)	Hispanic	White (not Hispanic)
Autism	1.8	8.9	2.6	2.4	4.3
Deaf-blindness	#	#	#	#	#
Developmental delay	3.4	1.7	1.5	0.7	1.5
Emotional disturbance	7.8	3.9	10.7	4.6	7.5
Hearing impairments	1.0	2.7	0.9	1.5	1.1
Intellectual disabilities	7.1	8.1	13.6	7.4	7.3
Multiple disabilities	2.0	2.7	2.3	1.7	2.3
Orthopedic impairments	0.6	1.6	0.7	1.2	1.0
Other health impairments	8.1	6.7	8.4	5.6	11.9
Specific learning disabilities	50.4	35.5	44.2	54.8	41.6
Speech or language impairments	16.9	26.9	14.3	19.3	20.5
Traumatic brain injury	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5

Visual impairments	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.4
All disabilities	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), OMB #1820-0043: "Children with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," 2006. Data were updated as of July 15, 2007.

Table 1.4.

Percentage of students ages 6 through 21 served under IDEA, Part B, by race/ethnicity and educational environment: Fall 2006



Previous research indicates that the placement of African American males who are in ED settings are at greater risk for negative outcomes. Those negative outcomes include: higher drop-out rates (Osher, Morrison, & Bailey, 2003; Sinclair & Christensen, 2005); a significant rate of unemployment (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009); and imprisonment (Osher, Coggshall, Colombi, Woodruff, Francois, & Osher, 2012). Such data has stimulated a major discussion in the field of special education

among policy makers, and school districts about overrepresentation. These discussions provide implications on how to unravel the dilemma of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. Its toll on society is large.

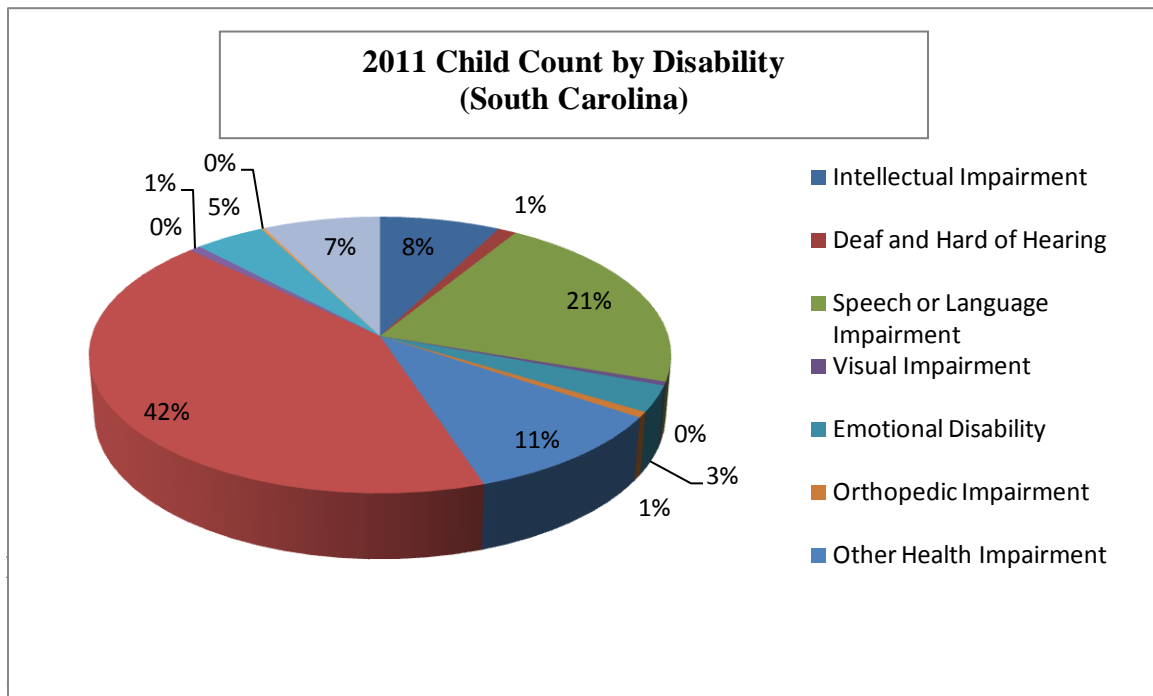


Figure 1.1.

2011 Child Count by Disability (South Carolina)

Significance of the Problem

Based on data from Equity Alliance (2010), school districts throughout the nation report a higher representation of African American males in special education programs than their presence in the general education environment would indicate should be the case. The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required states to collect data to monitor and decrease disproportionality. To address this IDEA requirement, the US Department of Education uses 20 monitoring indicators for its State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR).

As part of the monitoring, local school districts are informed each year by state departments of education on whether they met their State Performance Plan Indicators (Indicators 9 and 10) on measuring racial/ethnic disproportionality in special education. A district's annual count of special education students is reviewed based on a weighted risk ratio which is the comparison of specific groups being represented in special education (Hosp & Reschly, 2003).

The South Carolina State Department of Education determines whether there is a disproportionate representation in special education via a "multitier process." The goal is to document disproportionate representation as a result of inappropriate identification. The State uses a calculation of weighted risk ratios to analyze the data that local educational agencies are required to submit (Table 1.6). This analysis calculates weighted risk ratios of students in special education including five race/ethnic groups. The purpose of this analysis is to compare the specific racial/ethnic group and their risk for identification with a comparison group and their risk. The result is a fairly accurate ability to determine the specific race/ethnic group's risk of being identified as having a disability as compared to the risk for all other students. Each local education agency (LEA) will receive a "cut-off" point that denotes whether based upon this criteria, the agency has over-identified an ethnic group for special education. The LEA is determined to be "at-risk" for their disproportionate representation due to inappropriate identification if their data exceeds the weighted risk ratio trigger.

As with any system, revisions will be made when the data supports a change and as a result the State Department of Education's Office of Exceptional Children decreased the trigger "from a shifting weighted risk ratio of 3.0 to 2.0 to a static 2.5 for

overrepresentation” As for underrepresentation, static weighted risk ratio of 0.25, remained untouched. Additionally the State was required to meet with OSEP requirement, which was two additional reporting years to the SPP and APR. South Carolina defines disproportionate representation as occurring when an LEA has the following:

A weighted risk ratio (WRR) greater than the threshold of 2.50 for overrepresentation, or less than 0.25 for underrepresentation, with an at-risk group size of 10 and a combined group of 15 for all other race/ethnicities in the category (total group size of 25). As a result, the cut-point thresholds are:

Table 1.5.

Cut-Point Thresholds

Year	WRR- Overrepresentation	WRR- Underrepresentation
2010-2011	2.50	0.25
2011-2012	2.50	0.25
2012-2013	2.50	0.25

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest district in South Carolina with a current enrollment of over 45,000 students. African American students represent 44 % of the school district’s enrollment and 55% of this enrollment receive special education services. Of the students who are defined within the category of emotional disability, 70% are African Americans.

Based upon the calculations from the December 2011 Child Count, the IDEA Determination Profile provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)

categorizes Charleston County School District in “Needs Assistance” status due to having a disproportionate number of African-American students in the categories of both intellectual disabilities and emotional disabilities due to inappropriate identification. In summary, CCSD was above the weighted risk ratio of 2.5 for Indicator 9 and Indicator 10. African American males have the highest representation in special education programs in CCSD. Since July, 2012, the number of African American males identified as emotionally disabled is significantly higher than females identified for this category of disability.

Table 1.6.

CCSD General and Special Education Population Data

	Totals	Number African American	Percent African American
All Students	45,871	20,382	44.4%
Special Education	4,489	2,451	54.6%
Emotionally Disabled	218	153	70%

As a Director of Special Education, this researcher is committed to examining factors that continue to contribute to the disparity of placement for African American males in special education programs. Information obtained from this study may be used to reemphasize to teachers and school administrators that those who encourage high achievement and consider each student’s individual strengths may greatly influence and impact student outcomes. If educational leaders believe that all students deserve equal access to academic opportunities, referral rates to special education will decrease while

ultimately deleting the problem of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education.

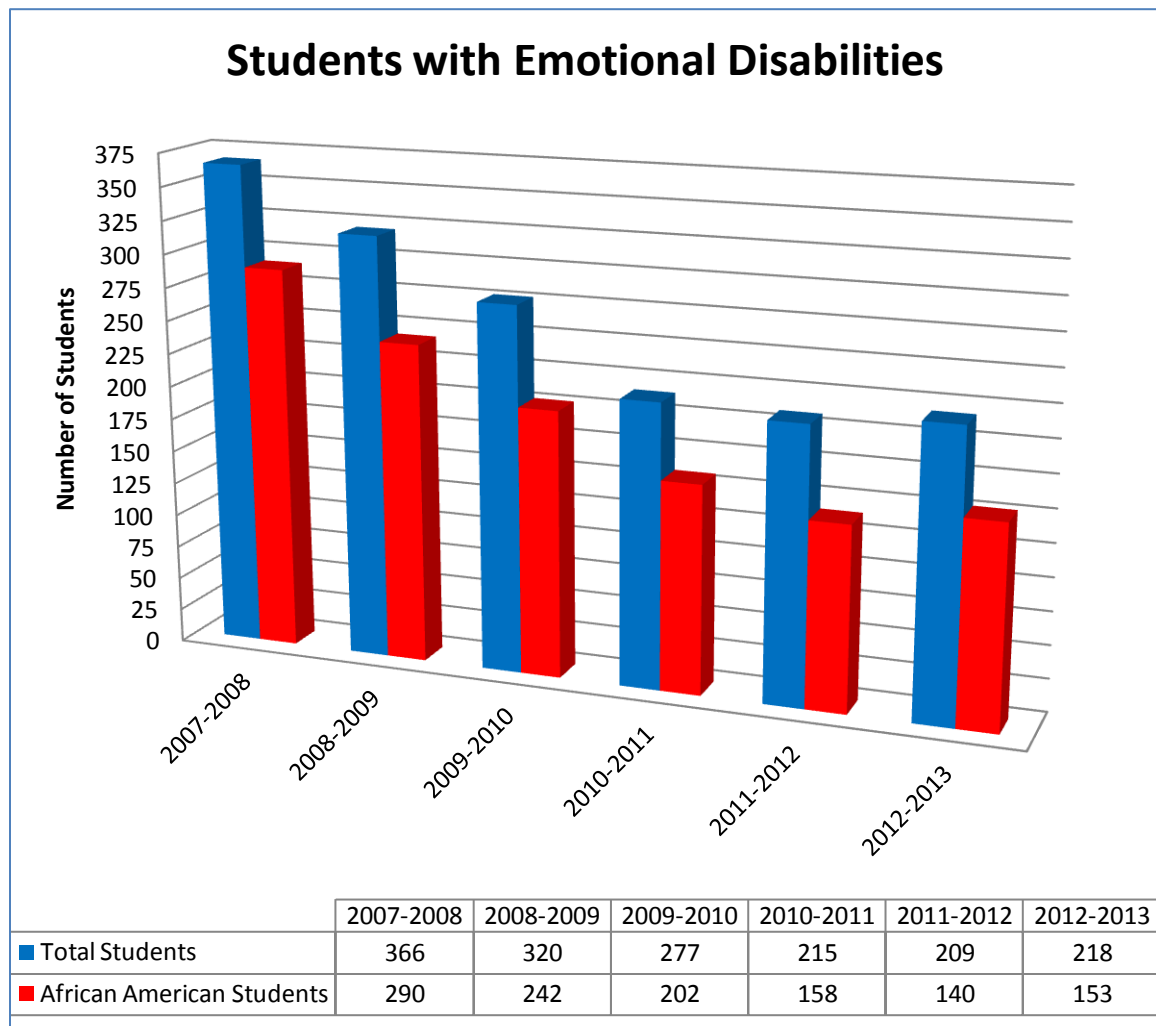


Figure 1.2.

CCSD Students with Emotional Disabilities

Table 1.7.

CCSD Students with Emotional Disabilities by Race and Gender

Age	Gender	Ethnicity
6	Male	African American
6	Male	African American

Age	Gender	Ethnicity
7	Male	White
8	Male	African American
9	Male	African American
10	Female	African American
11	Female	White
11	Male	African American
12	Male	African American
15	Female	African American
10 Students	7 Male; 3 Female	8 African American; 2 White

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine why educational leaders think African American males are disproportionately identified as emotionally disabled in special education programs. The study will assess the perceptions of the educational leaders of a South Carolina school district that was cited for overrepresentation.

General educators play a critical role in the rates of referral for African American males being considered for special education programs because they are typically the first source of referral (Taylor, Gunter, & Slate, 2001). In order to unravel the dilemma of the overrepresentation of African Americans males identified as emotionally disabled, it is important to gain the perspectives from general educators. The information on practice and perception garnered from general educators, the primary source for referrals of African American males, will inform pre-service and in-service development. It is the goal of this research to contribute information that will influence professional development, policy makers, school districts and the field of special education by

providing an understanding on how to attack the problem of overrepresentation of African American males.

The Gresham Survey (2005) addressed causal factors related to the problem of overrepresentation of African American elementary aged males in ED programs. The causal factors were environment, teacher perception, and school related variables because the research literature on factors for the overrepresentation of elementary aged black males identified as students with ED suggested a causal relationship between the risk factors and student representation in classrooms for students with ED (Gresham, 2005). The causal factors are outlined below:

1. **Environmental factors** that increase the risk of a disability include poverty, family structure, and parent education.
2. **Teacher perception** of the African American student's educational success is impacted when the teacher's cultural beliefs and prejudicial expectations are biased.
3. **School related variables** defined as teacher training and underrepresentation of cultural knowledge producers.

The Gresham Survey (2005) also addressed demographic variables that included race, gender, training on how to refer students for special education services, training to identify ED characteristics, and years of experience as a general educator. Additionally, administrators' perceptions will be assessed. The data collected from this survey instrument may be valuable in decreasing the amount of African American males being referred for special education services. State departments and school districts may find such data useful in establishing professional development for general educators relating

to the causal factors of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education and encourage the use of a culturally responsive assessment and practices for African American students with behavioral and learning challenges.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is significant for the following historically relevant reasons: Primarily, the study is conducted in Charleston SC, which served as a major historical port for slavery in America. More than 40 per cent of slaves arriving from the Middle Passage journey entered the United States through the Port of Charleston (Frazier, 2003). Additionally, Charleston was in the forefront of discriminatory but legal standardized testing after the landmark case, *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), which was used to prevent black students from attending elementary and secondary schools with their white peers (Baker, 2006). “Educational authorities in Charleston, like those in other southern cities, administered standardized tests and used results to expand tracking in public schools, institutionalizing new, more legally defensible barriers to black access” (Baker, 2006, p. 136).

As a result of the testing, many African Americans were placed in remedial classes. The tracking system “exploited the differences in academic achievement that were generations in the making” (Baker, 2006, p. 137). Some researchers assert that this exclusion of African Americans from white schools coupled with the mandatory integration of public schools built the foundation for overrepresentation in special education. (Connor & Ferri, 2005; Eitle, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005; Losen & Orfield, 2002). Consequently, Charleston has continued to battle the long-standing challenge of the overrepresentation of African American male students receiving special education.

African American males' disproportionate representation in special education, particularly in the category of emotional disability, continues to be a major concern. As the Director of Exceptional Children for Charleston County School District, the problem ranks high in level of importance for the district and for the state of South Carolina. In my case, the problem is also personal. I grew up on a sea island community connected by a long drawbridge to the city of Charleston known as James Island. Historically, James Island is the place where the Civil War began on April 12, 1861 and I know James Island as a place full of rich African heritage and a culture hailed as Gullah. Many of the slaves that passed through the port of Charleston ended up on the plantations of James Island. The remnants of the harsh days of slavery can readily be observed by the slave cabins that are still standing on the main road leading to James Island. One particular site, McLeod Plantation, is very evocative of the African American struggle. Each time I pass the plantation's refurbished slave cabins, I hear the voice of my mother, daughter of freed slaves, reminding me that my enslaved ancestors took fatal chances in order to learn how to read and write.

My early exposure to the concerns my Charleston ancestors faced to be educated and the current state of affairs as an Exceptional Children Director, whose district has been cited twice by the State Department of Education for having an overrepresentation of African American males in special education, led me to this study.

How we have arrived at the present state of affairs can be understood only by studying the forces effective in the development of Negro education since it was systematically undertaken immediately after emancipation. To point out merely the defects as they appear today will be of little benefit to the present and future

generations. These things must be viewed in their historical setting. The conditions of today have been determined by what has taken place in the past, and in a careful study of this history we may see more clearly the great theatre of events in which the Negro has played a part. We may understand better what his role has been and how well he has functioned in it. (Woodson 1933, 9, cited in Sadler, 2008, p. 41)

The purpose of this chapter is to first review the historically relevant literature related to the perilous journey of the African American's battle for equal educational opportunities in the South, which sets the stage for the current status of public education for African Americans. Saddler (2008) acknowledges that "Woodson's (1933) quote affirms that in order to obtain a full understanding of the current state of affairs in education, one must acknowledge the historical events that set the stage so long ago-an essential step in engaging in critical discourse" (p. 42). Therefore, using an historical overview combined with perceptions of local educational leadership, the prevalence of the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American males identified as emotionally disabled in special education programs will be examined. The level of cultural and educational sensitivity for diversity will be based upon perceptions of teachers and principals in Charleston County School District.

Over the past 40 years, there has been a wealth of literature examining the overrepresentation of African American students in public school settings (Artiles, & Bal, 2008; Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Kearns & Linney, 2005; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006; Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002) but scholars have noted that unraveling this challenge is very difficult (Patton, 1998; Powers

& Restori, 2004). The literature on overrepresentation has also identified concerns, beginning with the referral process (Andrews & Mulick, 1997; Harry & Anderson, 1995; Hosp & Reschly, 2003), the restrictiveness in placement (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch, Cuadrado, & Chung, 2008) and special education as resegregation (Blanchett, 2009; Green, McIntosh, Cook-Morales & Robinson, 2005). The literature also highlights potential causal factors related to the overrepresentation issue such as gestational/birth factors (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009), environmental factors, (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005), teacher perceptions (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003;), school related variables (Lugt, 2007), as well as the contributing demographic variables such as race (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005), gender (Taylor, Gunter, & Slate, 2001), and teacher training (Cartledge, Kea, & Ida, 2000). The historical, conceptual, theoretical, and leadership framework that illuminates the impact of this dilemma on students of color will be addressed in this chapter.

Pre Brown Era: The African Americans' Plight for Equal Educational Opportunities in the South

From slavery to present, African Americans have continued to struggle not only for their declared unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness but for their fundamental right to an education. Immediately after their freedom from slavery, African Americans began expressing their desire to read and write. One ex-slave asserted that, "there is one sin that slavery committed against me, which I will never forgive. It robbed me of my education" (Anderson, 1988, p.5). Determined that slavery was not going to steal their religious zeal or emerging literacy skills, ex-slaves developed Sabbath schools in their color. These groups established their beliefs and worked towards

eliminating illiteracy among their people. Escaped slaves risked their lives by returning to plantations to teach enslaved African Americans how to read (Burnett, 1996). And their approach was simple it emphasized using the “by any means necessary” tradition for eliminating illiteracy. This approach was continuously passed down, and former enslaved African Americans moved beyond the risk of quietly teaching their own how to read, to being the first to establish a widespread system of universal schools for all children to become educated. As a matter of fact, Tyack and Hansot (1982) pointed out that the illiteracy of African Americans dropped from 82 % in 1870 to 30 % in 1910” (p.87). Based on this finding, it was clear that African Americans put a considerable amount of effort into making sure that they established a financial and political framework to develop and sustain their schools. Black educational advocates, leaders, and teachers “believed that the masses could not achieve political and economic independence or self-determination without first being organized, and organization was not impossible without well-trained intellectuals - teachers, ministers, politicians, managers, administrators, and businessmen” (Anderson, 1988, p. 28). With alacrity, African Americans adopted a classical liberal curriculum at the normal and collegiate school level. Literacy skills were linked to secure jobs, upward mobility, economic rights, acquisition of land, and a symbol of freedom that could not be taken away. Furthermore, state supported educational policies were rallied for and developed by southern black Republican Party Conservatives. One of these conservatives happened to be W.B. Nash, an affluent member of the South Carolina Republican Party during Reconstruction. Nash argued in front of the legislature that “all schools should be open for all” (Penn Center, 2010). Nash asserted that public education was based on state

taxation and that African Americans were afforded this basic citizenship right. Education was crucial to the independence and acceleration of African Americans. “Black politicians and leaders joined with Republicans in southern constitutional conventions to legalize public education in the constitutions of the former Confederate states” (Anderson, 1988, p. 19).

Legally Intersecting Literacy

In opposition to the freedmen’s educational revolution, southern whites testified in 1883 before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor that African Americans should be offered an industrial education in order to maintain caste systems and the division of labor (Anderson, 1988, p. 28). The southern white planters’ class believed that African Americans needed to be trained for jobs that fit their station and that classical education was not a practical means of instruction for agricultural laborers. The planter class used their political and economical control to legally intersect the Negroes’ dream to eliminate illiteracy and their goal to develop a constitutional pathway to literacy. Although this class supported public education for the poor Whites, they did not believe in education for African Americans. The planters, Anderson states, “did not believe in giving the Negro any education. Any degree of education eroded the planters’ ability to exploit black labor upon which their agrarian order depended” (p. 23). Labor and economic hardship was used to prevent African American children from attending school. With white supremacists holding the dominant positions in the state government and in society, the public school system was sabotaged. Using the law, white supremacist groups lowered taxation, dismantled compulsory attendance laws, and halted new laws that supported free public schools. The goal was to maintain their society.

As ex-slaves confronted the racist ideology established by the planters against universal schooling, white supremacists continued to oppose and legally dismantle the educational revolution of freedmen. “The ex-slaves’ initiative in establishing and supporting a system of secular and Sabbath schools, and in demanding universal education for all children presented a new challenge to the dominant-class Whites – the possibility of an emerging literate black working class in the midst of a largely illiterate poor white class” (Anderson, 1988, p. 27). The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was a period when African Americans established an educational vision and mission to pronounce the importance of universal, state-supported public education for all citizens. This period in history was also a time when white planters-merchants and northern industrialists educational vision and mission was to create a second class citizen to be used as cheap labor force.

Labor’s Limit

Ironically, as former slaves were polishing their golden accomplishments regarding universal schooling and social progress, northerner Samuel Armstrong and his protégé, Booker T. Washington, put into motion an ideology that caused a movement that ultimately did not serve African Americans well. Armstrong, in 1868, gave birth to Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, an industrial education model that was originally designed to involve teacher preparation but utilized daily manual labor as the base of its normal school training. Whites assumed that the freedmen had to be guided and controlled due to slavery. Armstrong’s goal was to train black teachers who would impart the lessons of "work habits, practical knowledge, Christian morality, and acceptance of a subservient role" (Anderson, 1988, p.35). The Hampton model of

industrial education was to "de-politicize" and "defuse" black challenges to white opposition to universal education. Providing, Anderson asserted, "the equivalent in quality to that of a fair tenth grade" education, the Hampton model preached an education gospel that emphasized that black people be apolitical" (p. 35). The white supremacist segment of the population believed that African Americans should not be "allowed to vote, serve as politicians, or participate in public policy decisions because black people were not capable of self-government" (p. 37). These beliefs were based on the premise that black people needed moral development. Prominent white society believed that the real role of the African American was to deliver the planters' and merchants' needs for cheap non-confrontational labor.

The industrial education model was a strategy to adapt the African American classical curriculum into a model that would reconstruct a form of slavery. Hampton Institute was a normal school dedicated to training teachers, such as Booker T. Washington, who would teach black workers and prepare them for their "place" in the South after Reconstruction. The institute was part of a national movement focused on technological, trade, and manual education for the general American population. Although Hampton focused on teacher training, industrial education, as it was originally defined, did not involve teacher preparation. Industrial training included three main areas of focus: training in applied science and technology, trades, and an academic curriculum to modify the behaviors of black people. White supremacist groups assumed that the newly freed black people had to be guided and controlled because they were incapable of "self-direction" due to slavery's destruction of their minds and moral compasses (Baker, 2006). Armstrong created a curriculum that sought to civilize and direct ex-slaves

towards manual labor in order for them to be able to support the white southern household in the post-Reconstruction period. Washington completed Armstrong's curriculum and became the chief disciple of the Hampton model.

Industrial education introduced northern educators, industrialists, philanthropists, and Washington into the debate between African-Americans' universal, state-supported public education and the white planter-merchant class' efforts to reconstruct a type of slavery. Washington objected to classical education for the general black population and founded Tuskegee Industrial and Normal Institute in 1881. Washington, being the faithful disciple of Armstrong, asserted that academic education for African Americans was of low quality and that the only way for African Americans to get ahead was to focus on racial development. Both Washington and Armstrong avowed that the African Americans “position of race in the South was not a result of oppression but of the natural process of cultural evolution” (Anderson, 1988, p. 51). They postulated that African Americans were generations behind whites and by distinct definition this made African Americans the subordinate race. Anderson emphasized that “by the turn of the century, the ‘Hampton-Tuskegee Idea’ represented the ideological antithesis of the educational and social movement begun by ex-slaves” (p. 33). Through their white supremacist ideological lens, the industrial philanthropists magnified the Hampton-Tuskegee Idea and expanded the growth of black industrial education within the southern boundaries as a response to their economic, political, and social setbacks that was successfully launched by the freedmen’s educational revolution.

Expansion of the Hampton-Tuskegee idea meant the need for funding industrial training institutions for African Americans. One goal was to ensure that African

American children had buildings for schools. In the nineteenth century, most of the rural African American schools were in condemnable conditions. Many African American children did not have school buildings, but learned in churches, private buildings, and lodge halls. Anderson (1988) noted that “the philanthropists saw the small private black normal schools and high schools as the most strategic means to supplement the Hampton-Tuskegee supply of industrial teachers” (p. 114).

The plan was to build schools that had industrial teachers readily available to teach the vocational curriculum, but funds were needed. White businessmen and philanthropists were sought and they overwhelmingly supported the Hampton-Tuskegee idea. Julius Rosenwald, CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Company, became actively interested in the endeavor. Washington approached Rosenwald in 1912 with this idea and Rosenwald offered matching funds. Rosenwald believed in the Hampton-Tuskegee model which eventually led to the funding of 4,597 school buildings for 65,000 African Americans in the South (Penn Center Lecture). Although Rosenwald gave the African American students sound buildings, inequities remained in the areas of teacher salary, curriculum, and school resources.

Many of the industrial schools faded away in the 1930s. Anderson (1988) noted that its adverse impact on the freedmen’s educational revolution was permanent as white supremacist ideology remained ever present in policies and practices that were intended to “adjust black southerners to a life of subordination, and ... were oppressive in form and content” (p. 147).

Magnified Views of the White Supremacist Ideological Lens

The ideology of white supremacist is based on the foundation that segregation is part of the natural order, and as such, a natural solution. White superiority principles are based on the misconception that African Americans are inferior to whites and very different from whites. Tatum (1997) compared the “ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of white supremacist and is moving with it” (p. 11). This segment of society assumed that segregation of the races would result in racial integration, a catastrophic consequence. “White terrorism” reached further than separate public facilities; industrial philanthropists and planter-merchant class whites wanted to prevent African Americans from academic power and political power. Although African Americans attempted to use education to become citizens, participate in politics, and find economic success, the white supremacist groups used education to control the African Americans.

Throughout history, laws have been established to systematically keep various ethnic groups in subordinate roles. Southern states and many bordering states, established a “racial caste” system that “represented the legitimization of anti-black racism” (“What Was Jim Crow?,” n.d.). From the 1800s to the late 1960s, the intention of the Jim Crow law was to separate the races. The law endeavored to maintain white supremacist and maintain second-class citizenship for African Americans (Baker, 2006). The law was a legal method to segregate and disfranchise. Loewen (2007) noted that “during this time, white Americans, North and South, joined hands to restrict black civil and economic rights” (p.165). The philosophy of white supremacist included all white social classes

and continued the ideology of white is right and “attacking education was an important element of the white supremacist model” (p. 163).

The dominant white population wanted to ensure that the color line remained; as a result, separating the races and separation and inequality of schools (Baker, 2006).

White supremacist included all classes; thus, as the lower-class whites raised politically, a complete deprivation of civil rights and segregation, both in law and in practice, occurred. Unfortunately, segregation allowed African Americans very few opportunities. Baker (2006) wrote that:

Unlike racial extremists who believed that white supremacist should be maintained by any means necessary, the paternalistic conservatives who led Charleston into the twentieth century were not opposed to “Negro Progress.” Whites and African Americans should be kept apart, but segregation, they asserted, would allow each race to develop its own culture, institutions, and leadership to its highest potential. (p. 23)

The Era of Brown: The Arrival of Legal Paradoxical Interventions for Equal Opportunities

The case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896) involved an African American who sat in a car reserved for Whites only. The holding stated that Plessy’s rights were not denied. Separate accommodations were equal to the white accommodations. Separate but equal was not a system of inferiority. Unsatisfied with the outcome of separate but equal, African Americans began to bring many civil rights cases in federal and state courts. *Cumming vs. Richmond County Board of Education* (1899) held that separate but equal schools were allowed. These cases extended the separate but equal argument to

education. The laws clearly supported education for white students, which supported the ideology of white supremacist.

In the South Carolina case, *Briggs vs. Elliot of Clarendon County* (1952), focus was on the inferior conditions of African American students whom experienced South Carolina racially segregated school system. White supremacist groups attempted to legitimize the phrase, “separate but equal” (Anderson, 1988). These small three words disfranchised the black race. Because of the color of their skin, many people were destined to live second-class lives. According to the “separate but equal” notion it was acceptable to relegate African Americans to use inadequate buildings, inadequate transportation and unequal teacher’s salaries when compared to the schools provided for Whites (Baker, 2006). *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) was a case that included much more than the education of children. This case epitomized discrimination, stereotype, religion, and characteristics of culture. This case was instrumental in making changes made to the policies and practices espoused by white supremacist ideology in educational and social systems. *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) maintained an important position in the Civil Rights Movement. Based on findings in the case, the Supreme Court decided that racially segregated schools are inherently unequal. The Court decided that minority students learned better in racially mixed classrooms. A plan was conceived for implementing racial desegregation in the schools. The district courts were ordered to integrate the schools with all deliberate speed, but a decade after the decision, most schools in the South were still segregated (Baker, 2006; Anderson, 1988). The opposition to remain separate was intense (Baker, 2006; Anderson, 1988).

As second-class citizens, African Americans did not have any control of the local, state or federal governments. The second-class citizens lived and survived with laws designed to keep them a poor and a subordinate class of citizens. African American schools were unequal, black students did not have the same basic rudimentary tools of learning as white students. African Americans students were given second-hand textbooks full of hand-written racial epithets and many students “had to kneel on the floor and use benches to write on” (Baker, 2006, p. 1).

Although Brown and Plessy are significant cases in the history of equal educational opportunities for all students, the reforms were not compelling nor did they stimulate enduring transformations. Many African American children still do not experience the same rigor of education as their white counterparts and many minority children of poverty continue to receive a substandard education. African American children are not behind in academic achievement because of inferior intellect but because of the legal barriers that prevent them from having a superior education (Blanchett, 2009). All too often, many African American children are faced with overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated buildings, teachers that cannot relate to their culture, low expectations and a diminished curriculum that decreases access to equal opportunities.

Charleston’s Role in Educating African American Students

Mamie Garvin Fields and Septima Poinsette Clark were black teachers in Charleston, South Carolina that looked beyond the overcrowded and poor structure of school houses to provide education to rural African Americans. Fields was a teacher at Society Corner in 1926 and described the schools as “two dilapidated buildings in the middle of some woods.” Fields emphasized that the school officials in Charleston “had

let the schools run down terribly” (Baker, 2006, p. 1). Despite the resources of low quality that Fields faced on a daily basis, she felt charged and responsible to provide her black students with a high quality educational experience. Clark used her experiences as an educator and found many avenues to create equity in teaching salaries, literacy, and citizenship for African Americans. Clark understood that African Americans experienced an oppressive system as well inequality, illiteracy, and poverty. Like most African-American teachers in the South, Clark faced inadequate schoolhouses, lack of transportation for students, short school terms, and overcrowded classrooms, as well as low wages. Clark became an advocate for equality and sought the help of Federal District Judge J. Waties Waring of South Carolina. Therefore in 1945 and through this partnership, Judge Waring ruled in favor of the Septima Clark and Viola Durvalls Class Action Suit, in which black teachers with equal education should receive pay equal to their white counterparts (Baker, 2006).

Southern post-Brown government officials established legal barriers that prohibited the African American from accessing education. Ten states, including South Carolina, enacted the pupil placement law which “strengthened the power and authority of local officials over student assignment” (Baker, 2006, p. 135). Although the NAACP challenged the law, the courts upheld the states’ decisions and concluded that school officials had the right to determine school assignments. As the educational officials rationalized reasons for restricting the access of African Americans with their white counterparts in schools, tracking or ability grouping increased at a steady rate. Standardized tests, challenging curriculum, and ability grouping are only some of the

procedures that have been initiated in the past, and are still used in the present and as a result, legalized segregation .

When Charleston's black educators like Clark and Fields spearheaded the fight for equal wages and prevailed, South Carolina reacted by developing and implementing standardized testing as a basis for not using race but aptitude for salary determination of black and white teachers. Before Charleston heard the first case regarding equal pay for black teachers in 1944, South Carolina "established a new system that based teacher pay scores on the National Teacher Examinations (NTE)" (Baker, 2006, p. 44). Black teachers charged that this was another strategy enacted within the white supremacist ideological lens to highlight the inferiority of black teachers in relation to their white counterparts.

Not only was standardized testing used as a way to lower the presence of black teachers in schools, it was also a practice used to determine which schools black students should attend (Anderson, 1988). Since the onset of the Hampton-Tuskegee Idea, southern whites believed that African Americans were better equipped for service jobs and an academic curriculum would not be suitable for race development. As a way to decrease the impact of Brown's ruling on desegregation and the amount of black students entering higher education, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) created the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (Baker, 2006). The University of South Carolina became the first college to implement the use of standardized testing to determine entry into their institution. The president of the university acknowledged that the school could "legally exclude students" by using a national examination that was not based on "racial standards" (Baker, 2006, p. 132). This legal measure was definitely another white

supremacist ideological tactic that reassured a certain contingent that black students were inferior and not academically capable to handle a college curriculum.

Ability grouping functions under the guise of supporting students; however, this system violates the principle of equality. The tracking system established in the black schools of Charleston in the 1950s and other southern cities “established a three-tiered track system that assigned those with scores above 90 to an honors track, those with scores between 70 and 90 to a general track, and those with scores below 70 to a remedial track” (Baker, 2006, p. 137). In many schools today, the students with greater ability or higher-level classes are assigned to teachers who develop an alliance with them based on mutual respect, insistence and higher expectations. “The track system that was established in Charleston, like those that were created or expanded in other southern school districts after Brown, exploited differences in academic achievement that were generations in the making” (Baker, 2006, p.137).

Educational exploitation remains in our school systems today as many black students continue to be permanently assigned to lower level ability or remedial classes at significantly higher rates than white students. These permanent assignments have continued to generationally create black students with low motivation and teachers with even lower expectations and who are beleaguered over increased accountability standards.

From their devastating journey aboard the Middle Passage to their enduring battle for political, economic, and social progress, African Americans have remained determined to achieve the prerequisite for upward mobility, that is, literacy skills. The freedmen’s educational revolution sparked the interests of southern Whites to

immediately respond to the Negro's progress. Unremitting efforts led by the freedmen to eliminate illiteracy among African Americans were continuously overpowered by a government that was led by industrial philanthropists and a planter-merchant class whose white supremacist ideological tactics appeared to be used at every turn to ensure the subordination of African Americans.

Policies and practices within a legal realm have been successfully used throughout history to accelerate the subordination and illiteracy of African Americans. Case law, enacted by the federal government, that focused on equitable resources and equal educational opportunities for black teachers and students were legally halted by southern states who aimed to reconstruct slavery. Southern benefactors helped support the idea of industrial education for African Americans which contributed to many centuries of low achievement and success of black students.

Presently the low achievement of black students compared to their white counterparts can be illustrated by this country's failure to close the achievement gap. Educators are currently held accountable for the low performance of minority students. With the pressure of "Rising to the Top", educators are becoming more frustrated with students of color and students are being suspended and placed into special education programs in disproportionate numbers. Educators must elevate their skills by developing a culture of social reform "with a new legitimacy based on responsiveness to people who had been traditionally powerless" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 235).

Post Brown's New Kind of Segregation: Special Education and African Americans

Despite the decision in the landmark case Brown to educate all children, Saddler (2008) asserted that the "problem of educating Black children in America is as old as the

presence of African Americans within the country” (p.41). The prevalence of African Americans in special education has been a long standing challenge for researchers and policy makers. “In addition to prohibiting racial segregation in public education, the *Brown* decision was especially important in securing appropriate educational services and opportunities for students with disabilities”(Blanchett, 2009, p. 372).

Conceptual Framework

Nurturing the Development of a Critical Race Consciousness

Thus, it was clear, education was crucial to the independence and acceleration of freed African Americans. Since slavery, freed African Americans expressed their desire to read and write. Their desires began an educational revolution that eventually led southern whites to establish laws that supported an industrial education for African Americans in order to maintain a caste system and the division of labor (Anderson, 1988, p.19). These laws that were established through a white supremacist ideological lens which began a trajectory of conditions that were designed to inhibit the educational and social advancement for people of color.

And yet, irrespective of these laws, many African Americans remained committed to their mandate. That is, the educational vision and mission to establish the importance of universal, state-supported public education for all citizens. Their goal was to teach and inspire all generations to experience the freedom that educational opportunities produced, in spite of the grueling adversities as members of a racial caste group. Carter (2008) refers to this awareness as cultivating a critical race consciousness or when African Americans “do not adopt a victim mentality; rather racial adversity motivates them to counter societal stereotypes about members of their racial groups and persevere in their academic pursuits” (p. 22). This cultivation began with the unrelenting efforts of freed

slaves, whose established beliefs and determination to eliminate illiteracy among their people influenced many generations to come, including my family.

Passing the old slave quarters on James Island, my mother reminded me of the brutal scars earned by our ancestors if they were caught reading and writing as well as the harsh punishments endured if found teaching other slaves. My mother, like her ancestors, acknowledged education as the most stable and logistical route to freedom, which in turn, helped cultivate my cultural consciousness. In a study conducted by Carter (2008), findings revealed that many black students “understood their caste-like positioning; however, it did not result in them developing a victim mentality about their status as members of a racially discriminated group” (p. 18-19). Carter (2008) further contended that “when parents and teachers nurture positive racial socialization for Black students, they help these students become and remain high achievers who have strong racial and achievement self-concepts” (p.23).

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

Scholars agree that students must be instructed in a manner that develops a critical race consciousness that immediately encourages the examination and development of a response to societal inequities (Carter, 2008; Milner, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Achieving educational equality equates to optimal personal development, respect, and social citizenship (Shah, 2010). Educational equality intersects or “crosses the divide between civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights” (Shah, 2010, p. 9).

In order to closely examine the intersection of race, racism and equal rights in education, scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced critical race theory (CRT) in 1995 as an analytical framework in the field of educational research (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This section of the literature review provides an outline of Critical Race Theory (CRT) since “it can be a powerful lens through which to investigate the current state of affairs in public education today” (Saddler, 2005, p. 43). Nearly sixty years after *Brown*, African American males continue to be placed in segregated settings, whereas, before *Brown*, freed slaves were demanding the rightful entrance to public educational institutions.

As the most insidious of segregated settings, is that of special education placements, the ability to examine the process and factors that contribute to the process is vital to the culture of change. CRT serves as a tool to critically analyze the perceptions of general educators on the overrepresentation of elementary-aged African American males categorized as emotionally disabled in special education programs.

In order to unravel the challenges faced by educators to educate African American youth, their biases and stereotypes must be revealed so that racial and cultural differences are not defined as deficits. These preconceptions often lead to lowered expectations that ultimately place a disproportionate number of African American males in special education programs. First and probably foremost, educators must consciously recognize that their own cultural experiences will affect their interactions with others.

As Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie warns in the TED talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, that one story about a group of people leads to ignorance, which in turn, creates stereotypes and “the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that

they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” The conceptual framework of critical race theory is grounded “in the distinctive contextual experiences of people of color and racial oppression through the use of literary narratives and storytelling to challenge the existing social construction of race” (Saddler, 2005, p. 42). The use of voice or “naming one’s own reality” is a central theme in CRT. Ladson-Billings (1998) points out that in order to appreciate one’s perspective, the individual’s voice must be understood.

My storytelling is prevalent throughout this study as it is a critical component of CRT. My stories are useful in that it does not only highlight voice as a central theme of CRT but it points out that “CRT makes race, and its interlocking relationship with gender, class, and other demographic factors, central to any social analysis” (James, 2011, p. 468). Furthermore, the intent of CRT scholars is to “give previously silenced voices of people of color the opportunity to be heard in the form of counterstories” (McPherson, 2010, p. 798). Since this study examines the perceptions of general educators, CRT becomes a valuable framework that allows the investigation of the marginalization of students of color in special education programs and how it impacts their access to equal opportunities in public education (Sadler, 2005; Love, 2004; Lopez, 2003; Tate, 1997).

CRT has gained significant credibility as a powerful theoretical and analytical lens in educational research (Carter, 2008; Duncan, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). A review of the landmark case, *Brown*, exemplifies how education and civil rights generates the theme of equal opportunity in CRT. Ladson-Billings further explains that “this notion of equal opportunity was associated with the idea that students of color should

have access to the same school opportunities-i.e., curriculum, instruction, funding, and facilities-as white students” (p.21). Specifically, Delgado (1995) emphasized that CRT’s focus is on:

1. racism as normal in American society and calls for strategies for exposing it in various forms;
2. the significance of experiential knowledge and employing storytelling to “analyze the myths, presuppositions, knowledge and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render African Americans and other minorities one-down” (p. xiv);
3. challenging traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color;
4. a commitment to social justice; and
5. the transdisciplinary perspective.

The first premise of CRT is that racism is naturally engrained into our American society. Scheurich (1997) further cautioned that our range of research epistemologies (positivism, postpositivism, neo-realisms, interpretivisms, constructivisms, the critical tradition, and postmodernism/postconstructualisims) are all racially biased. Additionally, this bias is part of Civilization Racism that “...encompasses the deepest, most primary assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the ways of knowing that reality (epistemology), and the disputational contours of right and wrong or morality and values (axiology)” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 4).

Another premise of CRT is the challenge of the traditional and dominant discourse and paradigms on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to affect people of color (Carter, 2008; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). As members of the nondominant group, the African American elementary male in a special education program for emotionally disabled students is a prime illustration of this theme. Consequently, “members of nondominant groups and their children have a chance to succeed if they learn the ways of the dominant groups and if they are socially or economically closer to the top of the hierarchy” (Scheurich, 1993, p. 7). However, “some children of the dominant group, of course, fail and some children from the lower social groups succeed, but on average, the chances of success are substantially better for a person raised within a dominant group family” (p. 7). Therefore are school principals who are educated and then trained through the American value system able to impact their teacher’s perceptions of the African American male students categorized as emotionally disabled given their own dominant group experiences?

Moral Leadership Theory

In order to highlight the leadership frame of this study, James Burns’ leadership theory will be defined. Generally, leadership theorist James Burns set forth in his theory of moral leadership that the leader’s role is to teach and in much of his work, he does refer to leaders as teachers. “Teachers”—in whatever guise—treat students neither coercively nor instrumentally but as joint seekers of truth and of mutual actualization. They help students define moral values not by imposing their own moralities on them but by positing situations that pose hard moral choices and then encouraging conflict and debate. They seek to help students rise to higher stages of moral reasoning and hence to

higher levels of principled judgment. Throughout, teachers provide a social and intellectual environment in which students can learn (Burns, 1978, p. 449).

Burns also mentioned in a famous interview that his leadership theory directly applies to education because he too is a “teacher at a college that emphasizes teaching. “I’m interested in what happens when leaders – in this case teachers – deal with followers (students) in such a way as to help raise them through higher and higher stages of self-realization (Brandt, 2003, p. 384).” Burns referred to leadership as an engagement between teacher (leader) and student (follower) whereas the teacher must continuously be sensitive to the needs of their student’s level of needs. Burns’ general theory on moral leadership reveals the compelling relationship between the leader and follower and, as cited in Marion (2002), Bennis & Nanus, described the newly discovered transformational leader as an individual whose goal is to make followers into leaders and into change agents. So as current literature continues to clarify Burns’ definition of moral leadership, Burns (1978) offered the following advice:

The calls for leadership, the uncertainties as to just what it is, the ambivalent attitudes toward moral leadership and principled leaders – all these, I think, reflect deep ambiguity and confusion over the place of leadership in political life – at least in the democracies where leaders are expected to lead the people while the people are supposed to lead the leaders. The confusion will continue as long as we fail to distinguish leadership from brute power, leadership from propaganda, leadership from manipulation, leadership from pandering, leadership from coercion. (p. 452)

Summary

Overall, this study seeks to address how the African American student with special needs is perceived within his school environment. Additionally, this perception is defined as a mutual view between the principal and the teacher since they “share an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances” (Schwandt, 2007, p.39). A CRT premise is that intersubjective understanding or social construct intersects to affect people of color and CRT asserts that the African American student receiving special education services, who is within the non-dominant group, has a chance to succeed if the ways of the dominant group are learned. Therefore, a school leader who is a transformational leader will best be able to address the change needed to help the students thrive by having an influential relationship with each student’s teacher.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three describes the methods and procedures that will guide this research study. The primary purpose of this study will be to identify and analyze the current perceptions of educational leaders about factors that contribute to some of the reasons for the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American males identified as emotionally disabled in special education programs. This chapter will present the research design, methodology, and procedures related to data collection and instrumentation, as well as population selection. The chapter ends with data analysis procedures.

The purpose of this study will be to examine how the African American student with special needs is perceived within his educational environment based on the perceptions of elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers in the school district of Charleston, South Carolina. This study also will seek to determine if mutual views of the African American male student with special needs exist based on the general educators' race, gender, training on how the referral process for special education services, training to identify ED characteristics, and years of experience as a general educator/administrator.

The following research questions will guide this study regarding the perceptions of elementary school administrators and general education teachers about African American male students with an emotionally disability.

Research Question One

How do educators and administrators perceive the affect of the following factors on the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED:

1. Environmental factors
2. Teacher perception
3. School related variables

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED?

Research Question Three

Is there a difference in educators' and administrators' perceptions of overrepresentation based on the following demographic characteristics:

- a. race (Caucasian vs. other)
- b. training on how to refer students to special education services
- c. training to identify ED characteristics
- d. years of experience.

Research Design

A quantitative methodology was chosen for this study because the quantitative approach is objective. A quantitative study will provide objective information on general educators' perceptions of African American male students overrepresented in special education. A quantitative study is viewed as being positivist (Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Shaw, 2012). Onwuegbuzie (2002) describes positivism as "the essence of science, in which "hard" data were collected systematically and verified objectively. Mathematical and

statistical procedures became popularized for analyzing these data via probabilistic and inferential assumptions, in an attempt to explain, to predict, and to control phenomena” (p. 518). Therefore, quantitative research is a methodology that enhances and maximizes objectivity in uncovering the truth. Creswell (2009) indicated that quantitative research is when the researcher utilizes strategies of inquiry such as surveys and collects data to analyze statistical data. A survey study “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. From sample results, the researcher generalizes or makes claims about the population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). This research method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather the participants’ opinions and beliefs to answer the research questions. It was the researcher’s belief the general educators’ would provide adequate information with an anonymous survey.

The survey in this study uses a Likert-type scale to collect descriptive data such as feelings, perceptions, values, and demographic characteristics from participants (Creswell, 2009). The rationale for using a survey research is to generalize from a sample of a population in order to make inferences about the characteristics and attitudes of the population; as Creswell (2003) found, “a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying the sample of that population” (p. 153). The research design consisted of ascertaining the perceptions of education leaders as it related to African American males identified as having an emotional disability.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are the appropriate analyses when the goal of the research is to present the participants' responses to survey items in order to address the research questions. Descriptive statistics was used to address research question one. Descriptive statistics included: means and standard deviations on the variables of interest (environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables) by teacher vs. administrator. Means described the average unit for a continuous item; and standard deviations described the spread of those units in reference to the mean. Inferential (parametric and non-parametric) statistics are conducted when the goal of the research is to draw conclusions about the statistical significance of the relationships and/or differences among variables of interest. Inferential statistics was not appropriate based on the goal of the research for research question one.

MANOVA

The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized in research questions two and three. The MANOVA is the appropriate analysis when the goal of research is to assess if simultaneous mean differences exist on two or more continuous dependent variables by two or more groups, i.e., differences on the three variables of interest between teachers and administrators. The MANOVA uses the *F* test and creates a linear combination of the dependent variables for a grand mean, and is used to determine if there are significant differences. Prior to analysis, the assumptions of the MANOVA - normality and homogeneity of variance/covariance matrices - were assessed. Normality assumes that three dependent variables are normally distributed (symmetrical bell shaped) for each group of the independent variable (i.e., teachers and

administrators). Normality was assessed with skew and kurtosis values. Normality is defined as skew values between -2.00 and +2.00 and kurtosis values between -7.00 and +7.00 (Howell, 2010). Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances and assumes that the groups of the independent variable (i.e., teachers and administrators) have equal error variances. Homogeneity of covariance matrices is the multivariate equivalent to homogeneity of variance and was tested using Box's M test (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). If the MANOVA results were statistically significant, the individual ANOVAs (one per dependent variable) were examined (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). For each ANOVA (one per dependent variable) that was found to be statistically significant, a pair-wise comparison was conducted to determine where the significant difference lies.

Population

The population for this study consisted of all individuals identified as active elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers of Charleston County School District in South Carolina. Charleston County School District was chosen for this study because it was recently cited for the overrepresentation of African American males categorized as ED in special education and that the researcher serves as the current director of special education. Charleston is a historically relevant site for this study since it served as a major historical port for slavery in America where more than 40 per cent of slaves arriving from at its port. Charleston was also in the forefront of discriminatory but legal standardized testing after the 1954 landmark case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which placed many African Americans in remedial classes. Some researchers assert that this exclusion of African Americans from white

schools coupled with the mandatory integration of public schools built the foundation for overrepresentation in special education. (Connor & Ferri, 2005; Eitle, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005; Losen & Orfield, 2002). Consequently, Charleston has continued to battle the long-standing challenge of the overrepresentation of African American male students receiving special education.

Charleston County School is also one of the largest school districts in South Carolina with nearly 5,500 employees including over 2,200 classroom teachers, and approximately 150 school administrators serving about 45,000 students with at least 4,500 of those students receiving special education services. Charleston County also has over 1,000 square miles within its geographical range which equates to a very diverse student population in regards to socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

Instrumentation

The instrument for this study was modified by the researcher from the Gresham Survey (2005). Gresham originally designed the survey for elementary general education teachers. The causal factors were “operationally defined as environment, teacher perception, and school related variables since the research literature on factors for the overrepresentation of elementary aged black males identified as students with ED suggested a causal relationship between the risk factors and student representation in classrooms for students with ED” (Gresham, 2005, p. 123). The Gresham Survey is comprised of three sections. Part I presents 34 statements designed to quantitatively assess the perceptions of general educators about the overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identifies as student with Emotional Disturbance (ED). The 12 questions within Part II will collect demographic information from the

respondents. Part III asks participants to make further comments about overrepresentation. In order to establish content validity, a panel of 10 experts reviewed the instrument. The reliability of the survey was tested by Gresham using a pilot school (Gresham, 2005). Chronbach's Alpha was used to establish the reliability coefficient based on the responses from the pilot test. The reliability coefficient was .9392, which indicates that this survey is a valid measure of general educator's perceptions of the overrepresentation of African American males with emotional disability (Gresham, 2005).

To ensure credibility of the modified survey, by permission of Gresham, three professionals in the field of education evaluated the revised survey to determine if it adequately assessed general educators' perceptions of African American males identified with an emotional disability. The revised survey reflects the recommendations of these professionals.

Data Collection Procedures

The sample design was single stage because the researcher had access to the specific names of all participants that were surveyed. Creswell (2009) stated "A single-stage sampling procedure is one in which the researcher has access to names in the population and can sample the people (or other elements) directly" (p. 148). The target population was elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers from the researcher's school district.

The Senior Leadership Team granted the researcher permission to conduct the survey due to the district's ongoing challenges of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. Next, a formal letter was sent to the building

principals explaining in more detail the purpose of the survey. The researcher discussed an appropriate time for the survey to be sent out. This was crucial to encourage participation. Principals were asked to announce the survey, its importance and purpose. A survey link inserted in the letter so the participants could readily access it.

The researcher used Survey Monkey to collect survey responses. Survey Monkey is an Internet-based company that allows users to create their own web-based surveys. The researcher inputted the survey information into Survey Monkey and then sent the link to the participants. After the researcher closed the survey, Survey Monkey compiled data.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected from the survey was entered into SPSS 21.0 for Windows for analysis. The sample population was described with descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages were presented for categorical variables, including gender, ethnicity, education, grade levels taught, and other categorical variables. Means and standard deviations were presented to describe continuous data, including environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables.

Preliminary Analyses

Data was initially screened for excessive missing data and univariate outliers on the dependent variables. Excessive missing data was assessed throughout the responses per participant; participants with excessive missing cases, or who skipped large portions of the survey, were removed from the data set. The dependent variables of the study, environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables, were also assessed for univariate outliers. Outliers are extreme cases on a variable of interest that,

if left in the data set, can skew the results and interpretation of the variable. Outliers were examined by creating z scores from the dependent variables and assessing for values above 3.29 and below -3.29 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Outliers were removed when found in the data set.

Additionally, internal consistency was conducted to establish reliability on the dependent variables. Reliability determined if the scores computed by the survey instrument were meaningful, significant, useful, and have a purpose; in other words, reliable. The Cronbach's alpha test of reliability provides the mean correlation (presented as an alpha coefficient) between each pair of items and the number of items in a scale (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2006). Reliability was evaluated according to the guidelines suggested by George and Mallery (2010): alpha coefficients range from unacceptable to excellent where $> .9$ – excellent, $> .8$ – good, $> .7$ – acceptable, $> .6$ – questionable, $> .5$ – poor, and $\leq .5$ – unacceptable.

Because the same dependent variables were used in multiple analyses, the likelihood of committing Type I error increased. To control for this increase, a Bonferroni correction was applied. The original alpha value, .05, was divided by the number of times the same dependent variables were used in multiple analyses (5), which set the new alpha value at .01. Statistical significance for the MANOVAs were determined with the new alpha value at .01.

The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed prior to analyses. Multicollinearity refers to high correlations among the dependent variables. Strong correlations among the dependent variables in a MANOVA analysis do not allow for distinct differences to be made, thus making the MANOVA an inappropriate model to

discern for differences. Multicollinearity was assessed with Pearson correlations, where significant correlations above .90 indicated the presence of multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

Research Question One

How do educators and administrators perceive the affect of the following factors on the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED:

1. Environmental factors
2. Teacher perception
3. School related variables

To assess research question one, and to determine how educators and administrators perceive the affect of environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables on the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED, descriptive statistics was conducted. Means and standard deviations were presented for environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by teacher vs. administrator.

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED?

To assess research question two, and determine if there are statistically significant differences in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The dependent variables in the analysis were environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables; they were

each treated as continuous variables. The independent grouping variable was position (teacher vs. administrator); it was treated as a dichotomous variable. If the MANOVA model was found to be statistically significant, the individual ANOVAs (one per dependent variable) was examined to discern for significant differences. If the ANOVA model (one per dependent variable) was found to be statistically significant, a pair-wise comparison was conducted to determine where the significant difference lies. An alpha of .01 was used for analysis.

Additionally, open-ended responses to survey item 32, “Are there any other reasons that you believe contribute to overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identified as students with ED that we have overlooked?” were themetized by position (teacher vs. administrator).

Research Question Three

Is there a difference in educators’ and administrators’ perceptions of overrepresentation based on the following demographic characteristics:

- a. race (Caucasian vs. other)
- b. training on how to refer students to special education services
- c. training to identify ED characteristics
- d. years of experience.

To assess research question three, and to determine if there are statistically significant differences in the educators’ and administrators’ perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED by race (Caucasian vs. other), training on how to refer students to special education services (yes vs. no), training to identify ED characteristics (yes vs. no), and years of experience (less than 1 -

6 vs. 7 or more), four MANOVAs were conducted. The dependent variables in the analysis were environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables; they were each treated as continuous variables. The four independent grouping variables were race (Caucasian vs. other), training on how to refer students to special education services (yes vs. no), training to identify ED characteristics (yes vs. no), and years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more); they were each treated as dichotomous variables. One MANOVA will be conducted for each independent variable. If the MANOVA model was found to be statistically significant, the individual ANOVAs (one per dependent variable) were examined to discern for significant differences. If the ANOVA model (one per dependent variable) was found to be statistically significant, a pair-wise comparison was conducted to determine where the significant difference lies. An alpha of .01 was used for analysis.

Ancillary Analysis

The open-ended responses to survey question 45, “Please provide any additional comments or recommendations that you would like to share,” were also assessed for themes.

Role of the Researcher and Biases

The use of the researcher’s voice and storytelling are critical components in educational research aligned with Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Saddler, 2008). Ladson-Billings (1998) asserts that the “voice component of CRT provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step in understanding the complexities of racism and beginning a process of judicial redress” (p.16). As the researcher of this study, my voice is transparent and evident. I happen to be a minority

student of Gullah descent and tradition. I grew up on James Island, a Sea Island among the Gullah/Geechee Corridor. I can remember many moments during my years as a student in an all-white parochial school when teachers overcorrected and students made fun of my Gullah dialect and any behaviors that were not reflective of the dominant culture. There were occasions when I would not participate in class discussions or school activities in fear that I would be ridiculed for my strong “West Indies sounding” accent. I have since lost that accent for the world at large but it is still part of me, the safe part. Teachers never believed I was smart until I scored extremely high on a test or a standardized assessment.

These racialized and cultural experiences described above have not only shaped my research decisions but I have always felt that I have been charged, personally and professionally, with ensuring that the voices of African American students and their families are never silenced because others are not aware of their cultural underpinnings. Tillman (2002) expressed that African American historians “believed that plans for advancing the education of Black people should be predicated on understanding the cultural and historical contexts of their lives and attempts to portray Black people and culture(s) by persons who have limited knowledge of Black life leads to inaccurate generalizations” (pg. 4).

Milner (2008) introduced a non-linear framework that focuses on the following qualities: researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaged reflection and representation, and shifting from the self to system. Milner’s framework guides researchers, like myself, through the process of racial and cultural awareness, consciousness, and positionality during educational research. I referred to this

framework as the premise of this study since “dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen can emerge for researchers when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others’ racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing and experiencing the world” (Milner, 2008, p. 388).

Overall, my positionality in relation to my proposed research is important to keep in mind. I am an ethnic and linguistic minority whose voice does not represent the voice of the white female teacher or the white male principal dominated school system whose response to the needs of African American males is highly affected by their middle class ideologies (. I am a minority voice. A voice possessed with the commitment to ensure that students of color are given high quality instruction and equitable resources to proceed and progress in highly challenging societies.

Limitations

This study attempted to identify teacher and administrative perceptions of the major causal factors for the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American males identified as emotional disability in special education programs. However, there are several limitations to this study. This study was limited to elementary general educators in one school district in South Carolina. The major limitation of this study is the low survey response. There were a total of 223 respondents. This may be due to the timing of the survey, self-reporting, and not guaranteeing anonymity. Another limitation is that the Likert Scale does not allow the respondent to provide a clear reason for answering in such a manner.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined and described the methodology of the study. It further discussed the procedures used to collect and analyze data. The research design employed a quantitative methodology and utilized SPSS analysis software. A reliable and valid survey for educational research was used to gather data specific to the area of Charleston, South Carolina. This survey provided information related to the causal factors of the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education programs. Chapter 4 reveals and explains the findings of the statistical analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study's purpose was to examine how African American male students with special needs are perceived within their educational environment by elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers in the school district of Charleston, South Carolina. The objectives of this study were achieved by collecting data using the Gresham Survey from elementary general education teachers and administrators, the primary source for referrals of African American males to special education. These data not only addressed causal factors related to the problem of overrepresentation of African American elementary aged males in ED programs but also quantitatively assessed the perceptions of general educators of a South Carolina school district that was cited for overrepresentation. The researcher employed a quantitative methodology to analyze the collected data. The data was analyzed using standard descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

The Gresham Survey results were analyzed utilizing Microsoft Excel and SPSS software. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and the statistical analyses of research questions. The research questions for this study were:

Research Question One

How do educators and administrators perceive the affect of the following factors on the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED:

1. Environmental factors
2. Teacher perception

3. School related variables

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED?

Research Question Three

Is there a difference in educators' and administrators' perceptions of overrepresentation based on the following demographic characteristics:

- a. race (Caucasian vs. other)
- b. training on how to refer students to special education services
- c. training to identify ED characteristics
- d. years of experience.

Participants were invited to complete the Gresham Survey designed to quantitatively assess the perceptions of general educators about the overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identified as having an ED under the IDEA. The population for this study consisted of all individuals identified as active elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers of Charleston County School District in South Carolina. Data were collected for 245 participants. Data were assessed for missing cases and univariate outliers. Univariate outliers have an unusual value for a single variable. Data were visually examined for missing cases. Twenty-two participants skipped large portions of the survey and were removed from the dataset. Outliers were assessed with the creation of z scores which were used to examine the spread of outliers. Data were standardized to a mean of 0.00 and cases greater than 3.29 standard deviations from the mean were considered outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell,

2012). No outliers were found in the dataset. Final data analysis was conducted on 223 participants.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted to describe the sample. The majority of the sample was female (200, 90%) and White (172, 79%). Most participants indicated master's or graduate degree as the highest degree received. Fifty-two (23%) participants indicated they teach first grade, followed by 46 (21%) participants who indicated they teach third grade. The majority (156, 72%) have been a general educator for seven or more years, and many (88, 40%) indicated they have been at their present school for seven or more years. Frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1.

Frequencies and Percentages for Participants' Demographics

Demographics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	23	10
Female	200	90
Ethnicity		
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	1
Black	36	17
Hispanic	2	1
White	172	79
Other	5	2
Highest degree earned		
Bachelor's degree	65	29
Master's or graduate degree	132	60
Doctoral or post-graduate degree	24	11
Grade you teach		
Pre-kindergarten	14	6
Kindergarten	29	13
First grade	52	23
Second grade	41	18
Third grade	46	21
Fourth grade	37	17

Demographics	<i>n</i>	%
Fifth grade	39	18
Sixth grade	21	9
Years as a general educator		
Less than 1	11	5
1 - 3	23	11
4 - 6	26	12
7 or more	156	72
Years at present school		
Less than one	30	14
1 - 3	53	24
4 - 6	49	22
7 or more	88	40

Note. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding error or participant allowance to select multiple responses.

Participants were asked about their multicultural or sensitivity training. Forty one percent (92) of the participants indicated the Charleston school system had provided the training. The majority of participants indicated they have received training within the school system on how to refer students for special education services (166, 76%). A majority of participants indicated they had not received training within the school system on the characteristics of ED (121, 55%) and had not referred one or more African American males for special education services (116, 53%). The majority of participants indicated they were teachers (162, 77%). Frequencies and percentages for participants' characteristics are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.

Frequencies and Percentages for Participants' Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Who provided formal multicultural or sensitivity training?		
Current school system	92	4
		1
A teacher education program	86	3

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
		9
A different school system	38	1
		7
Other	19	9
Have you received training within the school system on how to refer students for special education services?		
No	53	2
		4
Yes	166	7
		6
Have you received training within your school system on how to refer students for potential special education support?		
No	51	2
		3
Yes	168	7
		7
Have you received training within your school system on the characteristics of ED?		
No	121	5
		5
Yes	100	4
		5
Have you referred one or more Black males for special education services?		
No	116	5
		3
Yes	105	4
		8
Have any of these referrals resulted in placements into classrooms for students with an emotional disability?		
No	69	6
		5
Yes	37	3
		5
What is the total percentage of African American students at your current school?		
0 - 25%	63	2
		9
26 - 50%	38	1
		7
51 - 75%	29	1
		3
Over 75%	89	4
		1
What is your current position?		
Teacher	162	7
		7
Principal	32	1
		5
Assistant principal	17	8
Which zone is your school in?		

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
North zone	83	38
East zone	36	17
Southwest zone	67	31
Central zone	27	12
Charter school	4	2

Note. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Means and standard deviations were determined for environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables. Higher scores indicated greater agreement that each of the corresponding factors influence the overrepresentation of elementary aged black males identified as students with ED. The mean score for environmental causal factors was 4.89. The mean score for teacher perceptions was 2.66, and the mean score for school related variables was 2.87. Cronbach's alpha tests of internal consistency were also conducted for each of the scores. The alpha coefficients indicated that the scales ranged from good to excellent (George and Mallery, 2010). Means, standard deviations, and alpha coefficients are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3.

Means and Standard Deviations for Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	No. of items	α
Environmental causal factors	3.02	0.75	9	.84
Teacher perceptions	2.66	0.93	14	.94
School related variables	2.87	0.91	7	.88

Prior to analysis, data were assessed to be certain the three dependent variables were related, and to be certain the MANOVA was the appropriate analysis. Data were also assessed to be certain the variables were not too related and did not violate the assumption of absence of multicollinearity. The environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables were all statistically correlated, however they were not correlated at a level $> .90$, indicating the assumption of absence of multicollinearity was met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The correlations ranged from .43 - .78. Correlation coefficients are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4.

Pearson Product Moment Correlations to Assess the Relationship among the Dependent Variables

Variables	Environmental causal factors	Teacher perceptions
Teacher perceptions	.48**	—
School related variables	.43**	.78**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Prior to analysis, data were assessed to be certain they met the assumption of normality. Normality was assessed by examining values of skew and kurtosis. To meet the assumptions, skew must be $-2 < x < 2$ and kurtosis must be $-7 < x < 7$ (Howell, 2010). All values were within the recommended parameters and are presented in Table 4.5.

Bonferroni Correction

Because the same dependent variables were used in multiple analyses, the likelihood of committing Type I error increased. To control for this increase, a Bonferroni correction was applied. The original alpha value, .05, was divided by the number of times the same dependent variables were used in multiple analyses, 5, which

set the new alpha value at .01. Statistical significance for the MANOVAs was determined with the new alpha value at .01.

Table 4.5.

Skew and Kurtosis for Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables

Variable	Skew	Kurtosis
Environmental causal factors	-0.21	-0.05
Teacher perceptions	0.33	-0.44
School related variables	0.07	-0.13

Research Question One

How do educators and administrators perceive the affect of the following factors on the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED:

1. Environmental factors
2. Teacher perception
3. School related variables

To assess research question one, descriptive statistics were conducted. Means and standard deviations were presented for environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by position (teacher vs. administrator). A visual examination of the mean values shows that teachers' and administrators' mean values were higher for environmental causal factors. On environmental causal factors, teachers' mean scores indicated that on average they responded between undecided and agree and administrators' mean scores indicate on average they responded between disagree and undecided. On teacher perceptions and school related variables, teacher and administrator mean scores indicate that on average they responded between disagree and

undecided. Means and standard deviations for environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by position are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6.

Means and Standard Deviations for Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Position

Variable	Teacher		Administrator	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Environmental causal factors	3.05	0.74	2.93	0.72
Teacher perceptions	2.62	0.90	2.74	1.00
School related variables	2.86	0.90	2.90	0.87

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED?

To assess research question two a MANOVA and an analysis of open-ended responses were conducted. Prior to conducting the MANOVA, the assumptions of homogeneity of variance/covariance were assessed. Homogeneity of variance was assessed with Levene's tests. The results of the Levene's tests were not significant, indicating the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met (Table 4.7). Homogeneity of covariance was assessed with Box's M test at $\alpha = .001$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The result of the test was not significant, $F = 0.50, p = .810$, indicating the assumption was met.

The MANOVA that was conducted to determine if there were differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables was not significant at $\alpha = .01, F(3, 207) = 1.01, p = .389$, indicating there were not statistical

Table 4.7.

Levene's Tests of Equality of Error Variances

Variable	F(1, 209)	p
Environmental causal factors	0.10	.757
Teacher perceptions	2.29	.132
School related variables	0.01	.964

differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by position (teacher vs. administrator). Because the MANOVA was not significant, the individual ANOVAs were not examined. The results are presented in Table 4.8. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.8.

MANOVA to assess differences on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Position (Teacher vs. Administrator)

Group	MANOVA <i>F</i> (3, 207)	ANOVA <i>F</i> (1, 209)		
		Environmental causal factors	Teacher perceptions	School related variables
Position	1.01	0.91	0.63	0.08

Note. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 4.9.

Means and Standard Deviations on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Position (Teacher vs. Administrator)

Variable	Teacher		Administrator		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Environmental causal factors	3.05	0.74	2.93	0.72	3.02	0.73
Teacher perceptions	2.62	0.90	2.74	1.00	2.65	0.93
School related variables	2.86	0.90	2.90	0.87	2.87	0.89

Additionally, open-ended responses to survey item 32, “Are there any other reasons that you believe contribute to overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identified as students with ED that we have overlooked?” were themetized by position (teacher vs. administrator). Themes were extracted by examining for commonalities among the responses. Fifty-two participants responded to survey item 32. However, six participants did not indicate their position (teacher vs. administrator); their responses were not considered. Of the 46 responses examined, nine were from administrators and 37 were from teachers.

Among the administrators’ responses, three themes were revealed: home and parent issues; stereotyping; and requirement and guideline issues. Four administrators noted lack of parental involvement or discipline (e.g., lack of parents’ willingness to seek/accept mental health support, lack of parental advocacy at the early stages of referral, lack of parental interaction in the home, etc.). Three administrators noted school guidelines and lack of proper requirements to help (e.g., elementary students are not given an alternative placement when dealing with those most difficult behaviors and therefore the only option is to get them into special education services, strict federal guidelines such as intervention and requirements for identification to ensure that overrepresentation does not happen, etc.). Frequencies for the themes are the number of administrators who support the theme are presented in Table 4.10.

Among the teachers’ responses, four themes were revealed: support; home and family issues; discrimination and differences; and issues not due to race. Five teachers indicated that students and teachers need support, and a model to aspire to, for success (e.g., more support is needed for general education teachers to ensure the success of

Table 4.10

Themes and Frequencies of Administrators

Theme	<i>n</i>
Home and parent issues	4
Stereotyping	3
Requirement and guideline issues	3

these students, I think that investigating schools that are ‘working’ and modeling them would be a great place to start, teacher need to develop relationships with students ... getting to know the students plays a huge role in their achievement, etc.). Thirteen participants indicated lack of parental involvement or discipline, as well as the environment the children were raised in, contribute to overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males (e.g., amount of time spent with parents and male role models available for African American males that are positive, behavior management of parents, you have to take into consideration the drugs and abuse the children are exposed to, I believe most factors are environmental, the number one factor is the home life, etc.). Eight teachers noted differences and discrimination towards African Americans and males (e.g., young African American males are often treated to a different standard, boys are more aggressive than girls so they stand out more, African American males are misunderstood...they feel that they are ‘targeted’, “I believe this cultural and language barrier that is dominant over the African American culture”, etc.). Eight teachers simply indicated the issues of overrepresentation is not due to race (e.g., as for my school, I believe that African American males are not ‘overrepresented’, color of the skin has nothing to with it, some of the circumstances fit any ethnic group...this survey is unfair and angers me, perhaps it is a true representation and has nothing to with race, etc.).

Frequencies for the themes are the number of teachers who support the theme are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Themes and Frequencies of Teachers

Theme	<i>n</i>
Support	5
Home and family issues	13
Discrimination and differences	8
And issues not due to race	8

Research Question Three

Is there a difference in educators' and administrators' perceptions of overrepresentation based on the following demographic characteristics:

- a. race (Caucasian vs. other)
- b. training on how to refer students to special education services
- c. training to identify ED characteristics
- d. years of experience.

To assess research question three, and determine if there are differences in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED by race (Caucasian vs. other), training on how to refer students to special education services (Q40), training to identify ED characteristics (Q42), and years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more), four MANOVAs were conducted. The dependent variables in the analysis were environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables. The independent variables were race (Caucasian vs. other), training on how to refer students

to special education services (Q40), training to identify ED characteristics (Q42), and years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more). One MANOVA was conducted for each independent variable. An alpha of .01 was used for analysis.

Prior to conducting the four MANOVAs, the assumptions of homogeneity of variance/covariance were assessed. Homogeneity of variance was assessed with Levene's tests. The results of the Levene's tests were only significant for: teacher perceptions by race, $p = .016$; school related variables by training to identify ED characteristics, $p = .001$; and school related variables by years of experience, $p = .044$. To correct for these three assumption violations, a more stringent alpha, $\alpha = .005$, was used to determine significance for the ANOVAs on teacher perceptions by race, school related variables by training to identify ED characteristics, and school related variables by years of experience (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Homogeneity of covariance was assessed with Box's M test at alpha = .001 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The results of the tests were only significant by training to identify ED characteristics, $p < .001$. To correct for this assumption violation, Pillai's trace was reported for the MANOVA (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012). The results of Levene's tests are presented in Table 4.12. The results of Box's M tests are presented in Table 4.13.

The MANOVA that was conducted by race (Caucasian vs. other) to determine if there were differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables was significant at alpha = .01, $F(3, 213) = 25.11$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .26$, indicating there were differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by race (Caucasian vs. other). The MANOVA model's effect size (partial η^2) of .26 indicates a medium difference exists on the

Table 4.12.

Levene's Tests of Equality of Error Variances

Variable	Environmental causal factors		Teacher perceptions		School related variables	
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
By race	0.93	.336	5.88	.016	2.11	.148
By training on how to refer students to special education services	0.04	.839	0.09	.771	0.48	.490
By training to identify ED characteristics	2.85	.093	1.19	.276	10.46	.001
By years of experience	0.18	.672	0.50	.481	4.12	.044

Table 4.13.

Box's M Tests of Equality of Error Covariance

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
By race	2.65	.014
By training on how to refer students to special education services	2.01	.060
By training to identify ED characteristics	4.10	<.001
By years of experience	2.28	.033

dependent variables between Caucasians and other races (Morgan, Leech, Gloekner & Barrett, 2007). Because the MANOVA was found to be significant, the individual ANOVAs were interpreted.

The ANOVA on environmental causal factors was not significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(1, 215) = 0.81$, $p = .369$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$, suggesting that no statistical differences exist on environmental causal factors by race (Caucasian vs. other).

The ANOVA on teacher perceptions was significant at $\alpha = .005$, $F(1, 215) = 63.23$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .23$, indicating that statistical differences exist on teacher

perceptions by race (Caucasian vs. other). The ANOVA model's effect size (partial η^2) of .23 indicates that a small difference exists on teacher perceptions between Caucasians and other races (Morgan, Leech, Gloekner & Barrett, 2007). A pairwise comparison was conducted to determine where the significant difference lies: other races had significantly higher teacher perceptions ($M = 3.52$) than Caucasians ($M = 2.44$).

The ANOVA on school related variables was significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(1, 215) = 32.48$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$, indicating that statistical differences exist on school related variables by race (Caucasian vs. other). The ANOVA model's effect size (partial η^2) of .13 indicates that a small difference exists on school related variables between Caucasians and other races (Morgan, Leech, Gloekner & Barrett, 2007). A pairwise comparison was conducted to determine where the significant difference lies: other races had significantly higher school related variables ($M = 3.50$) than Caucasians ($M = 2.70$). The results of the MANOVA and ANOVAs by race (Caucasian vs. other) are presented in Table 4.14. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.15.

The MANOVA that was conducted by training on how to refer students to special education services (no vs. yes) to determine if there were differences in environmental

Table 4.14.

MANOVA and ANOVAs to assess differences on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Race (Caucasian vs. Other)

Group	MANOVA $F(3, 213)$	ANOVA $F(1, 215)$		
		Environmental causal factors	Teacher perceptions	School related variables
Race	25.11**	0.81	63.23**	34.48**

Note. For MANOVA model, environmental causal factors, and school related variables: * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. For teacher perceptions: * $p < .005$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 4.15.

Means and Standard Deviations on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Race (Caucasian vs. Other)

Variable	Other		Caucasian		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Environmental causal factors	3.10	0.68	2.98	0.77	3.01	0.75
Teacher perceptions	3.53	0.98	2.44	0.77	2.67	0.92
School related variables	3.50	1.00	2.70	0.78	2.87	0.89

causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables was not significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(3, 215) = 1.94$, $p = .124$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, suggesting there were not statistical differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by training on how to refer students to special education services (no vs. yes). Because the MANOVA was not significant, the individual ANOVAs were not examined. The results of the MANOVA and ANOVAs by training on how to refer students to special education services (no vs. yes) are presented in Table 4.16. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.16.

MANOVA and ANOVAs to assess differences on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Training on How to Refer Students to Special Education Services (No Vs. Yes)

Group	MANOVA <i>F</i> (3, 215)	ANOVA <i>F</i> (1, 217)		
		Environmental causal factors	Teacher perceptions	School related variables
Training on how to refer students to special education services	1.94	1.95	1.98	5.20

Note. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 4.17.

Means and Standard Deviations on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Training on How to Refer Students to Special Education Services (No Vs. Yes)

Variable	No		Yes		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Environmental causal factors	3.14	0.72	2.98	0.74	3.01	0.73
Teacher perceptions	2.82	0.92	2.62	0.93	2.67	0.93
School related variables	3.13	0.83	2.80	0.92	2.88	0.90

The MANOVA that was conducted by training on how to identify ED characteristics (no vs. yes) to determine if there were differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables was not significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(3, 217) = 2.99$, $p = .032$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, suggesting there were not statistical differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by training on how to identify ED characteristics (no vs. yes). Because the MANOVA was not significant, the individual ANOVAs were not examined. The results of the MANOVA and ANOVAs by training on how to identify ED characteristics (no vs. yes) are presented in Table 4.18. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.19.

The MANOVA that was conducted by years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more years) to determine if there were differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables was significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(3, 212) = 4.23$, $p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$, indicating there were differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more years). The MANOVA model's effect size (partial η^2) of

Table 4.18

MANOVA and ANOVAs to assess differences on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Training on How to Identify ED Characteristics (No Vs. Yes)

Group	MANOVA $F(3, 217)$	ANOVA $F(1, 215)$		
		Environmental causal factors	Teacher perceptions	School related variables
Training on how to identify ED characteristics	2.99	3.04	0.53	4.82

Note. Pillai's Trace approximation for F was reported. For MANOVA model, environmental causal factors, and teacher perceptions: * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. For school related variables: * $p < .005$. ** $p < .001$

Table 4.19.

Means and Standard Deviations on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Training on How to Identify ED Characteristics (No Vs. Yes)

Variable	No		Yes		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Environmental causal factors	3.10	0.69	2.93	0.80	3.02	0.75
Teacher perceptions	2.71	0.88	2.62	0.99	2.67	0.93
School related variables	3.00	0.76	2.73	1.04	2.88	0.91

.06 indicates a small difference exists on the dependent variables between those participants who had less than seven years of experience and those participants who had seven or more years of experience (Morgan, Leech, Gloekner & Barrett, 2007). Because the MANOVA was found to be significant, the individual ANOVAs were interpreted.

The ANOVA on environmental causal factors was not significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(1, 214) = 2.46$, $p = .118$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, suggesting that no statistical differences exist

on environmental causal factors by years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more years).

The ANOVA on teacher perceptions was not significant at $\alpha = .01$, $F(1, 214) = 3.41$, $p = .066$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, that no statistical differences exist on teacher perceptions by years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more years) .

The ANOVA on school related variables was significant at $\alpha = .005$, $F(1, 214) = 11.15$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, indicating that statistical differences exist on school related variables by years of experience (less than 1 - 6 vs. 7 or more years) . The ANOVA model's effect size (partial η^2) of .05 indicates that a small difference exists on school related variables between those participants who had less than seven years of experience and those participants who had seven or more years of experience (Morgan, Leech, Gloekner & Barrett, 2007). A pairwise comparison was conducted to determine where the significant difference lies: those with less than seven years of experience had significantly larger scores ($M = 3.21$) than those with seven or more years of experience ($M = 2.76$). The results of the MANOVA and ANOVAs by years of experience (less than 7 vs. 7 or more) are presented in Table 4.20. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.21.

Ancillary Analysis

Additionally, open-ended responses to survey item 45, "Please provide any additional comments or recommendations that you would like to share" were themetized. Themes were extracted by examining for commonalities among the responses. Thirty-three participants responded to the survey question. Among the responses, four themes were revealed: race, teachers need training, constructive suggestions, and offended by

Table 4.20.

MANOVA and ANOVAs to assess differences on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Years of Experience (Less than 7 vs. 7 or More)

Group	MANOVA <i>F</i> (3, 212)	ANOVA <i>F</i> (1, 215)		
		Environmental causal factors	Teacher perceptions	School related variables
Years of experience	4.23*	1.29	2.95	11.15*

Note. For MANOVA model, environmental causal factors, and teacher perceptions: * p

< .01. ** p < .001. For school related variables: * p < .005. ** p < .001

Table 4.21.

Means and Standard Deviations on Environmental Causal Factors, Teacher Perceptions, and School Related Variables by Years of Experience (Less than 7 vs. 7 or More)

Variable					Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Environmental causal factors	3.14	0.73	2.97	0.72	3.01	0.73
Teacher perceptions	2.87	0.94	2.61	0.93	2.68	0.94
School related variables	3.21	0.71	2.76	0.95	2.89	0.91

survey. Six participants noted race in their responses (e.g., the only child that was placed into an ED program was White, all of my students are African American, when 98% of your population is African American then you are more likely to be referring African American children, I don't see the color of skin when I'm teaching, etc.). Eight participants indicated that teachers need training (e.g., classroom teachers need training in differentiation strategies to spiral learning of students lacking foundational skills, teachers would benefit from some extensive training in strategies on how to manage behavioral concerns, I believe teachers need to be trained on how to identify ED students, more education on the referral process so that I can be better informed as an educator,

etc.). Six participants simply provided constructive and positive support in response to the survey item (e.g., everyone should keep an open mind and we should listen to each other, have the district provide wrap and supports, find schools that are succeeding and model them, important to include the amount of impoverished and uneducated African American families, RTI needs to be revisited yearly, etc.). Three participants illustrated that they found this survey offensive and biased (e.g., I think this survey is biased...you never asked if white students were referred for services...it seems you are making assumptions based on your own bias or prejudice, I find this survey extremely offensive, and I am insulted by this survey). Frequencies for the themes are the number of administrators who support the theme are presented in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

Themes and Frequencies

Theme	<i>n</i>
Race	6
Teachers need training	8
Constructive suggestions	6
Offended by survey	3

Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the quantitative survey data collected to answer three research questions using the Gresham Survey. The research questions focused on the perceptions of elementary school administrators and general education teachers about African American male students with an emotional disability within their school environment. The Gresham Survey results were analyzed through the use of Microsoft Excel and SPSS software. Tables and charts outlining the data analysis were

also presented in this chapter. Chapter Five presents a summary of the information acquired, implications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Chapter Five, I will review of the central points of the study including: the purpose of this study, the review of the literature, the methodology used to collect the data, and the research questions. This chapter will also summarize the findings of this study and examine further implications for action.

Introduction

The issue of the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education is similar to the series in a cascade because it is a persistent and long-standing concern that has negatively impacted African American students, their families, school districts, the field of special education, and ultimately, the nation as a whole (Patton, 1998; Dunn, 1968). Researchers contend that the decision made in the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954), provided parents and advocates a platform by which to seek educational equality for students with disabilities but FAPE for African American students with disabilities developed into a resurgence of segregation.

Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons & Feggins-Azziz (2006) found that African American males are not only overrepresented in the ED category but they tend to be placed in more restrictive settings and underrepresented in less restrictive educational environments when compared to other peers with the same disabilities. School districts throughout the nation report a higher representation of African American males in special education programs than their presence in the general education environment would predict. In South Carolina, 42.5 % of African Americans receive special education

services whereas 53% are categorized as having an emotional disturbance (ED). Of the 53% of the African Americans categorized as ED, 79% are males. In the Charleston County School District, African American students represent 44 % of the school district's enrollment and 55% of this enrollment receive special education services. Of the students who are defined within the category of emotional disability, 70% are African Americans.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to examine how African American male students with special needs are perceived within their educational environment by elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers under a the Critical Race Theoretical Framework (CRT). It also determined if mutual views of the African American male student with special needs exist based on the general educators' race, gender, training on the referral process for special education services, training to identify ED characteristics, and years of experience as a general educator/administrator. General educators were the target audience because they play a critical role in the rates of referral for African American males being considered for special education programs since they are typically the first source of referral.

As a Director of Special Education, whose district has been cited twice for overrepresentation, this researcher is committed to examining factors that continue to contribute to the disparity of placement for African American males in special education programs. Information obtained from this study may be used to reemphasize to teachers and school administrators that those who encourage high achievement and consider each student's individual strengths may greatly influence and impact student outcomes. If educational leaders believe that all students deserve equal access to academic

opportunities, referral rates to special education will decrease while ultimately deleting the problem of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education.

Literature Review

Charleston County School District was chosen for this study because it was recently cited for the overrepresentation of African American males categorized as ED in special education and that the researcher serves as the current director of special education. Charleston is a historically relevant site for this study since it served as a major historical port for slavery in America where more than 40 per cent of slaves journeyed to its port from the Middle Passage. Charleston was also in the forefront of discriminatory but legal standardized testing after the 1954 landmark case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which placed many African Americans in remedial classes. Some researchers assert that the exclusion of African Americans from white schools coupled with the mandatory integration of public schools built the foundation for overrepresentation in special education (Connor & Ferri, 2005; Eitle, 2002; Kunjufu, 2005; Losen & Orfield, 2002). Consequently, Charleston has continued to battle the long-standing challenge of the overrepresentation of African American male students receiving special education.

Brown and *Plessy* are significant cases in the history of equal educational opportunities for all students. Nearly sixty years after *Brown*, African American males continue to be placed in segregated settings, whereas, before *Brown*, freed slaves were demanding the rightful entrance to public educational institutions. As the most insidious of segregated settings, is that of special education placements, the ability to examine the process and factors that contribute to overrepresentation is vital to the culture of change.

CRT serves as a tool to critically analyze the perceptions of general educators on the overrepresentation of elementary-aged African American males categorized as emotionally disabled in special education programs.

In order to unravel the challenges faced by educators to educate African American youth, their biases and stereotypes must be revealed so that racial and cultural differences are not defined as deficits. These preconceptions often lead to lowered expectations that ultimately place a disproportionate number of African American males in special education programs. First and probably foremost, educators must consciously recognize that their own cultural experiences will affect their interactions with others.

Methodology

The Gresham Survey was used in this study and is comprised of three sections. Part I presents 34 statements designed to quantitatively assess the perceptions of general educators about the overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identifies as student with Emotional Disturbance (ED). The 12 questions within Part II will collect demographic information from the respondents. Part III asks participants to make further comments about overrepresentation.

The district's Senior Leadership Team granted the researcher permission to conduct the survey due to the district's ongoing challenges of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education. A formal letter was sent to the building principals explaining in more detail the purpose of the survey. The researcher discussed an appropriate time for the survey to be sent out. This request was crucial to encourage participation. Principals were asked to announce the survey, its importance and purpose. A survey link was inserted in the letter so the participants could readily access it.

The survey was active for two weeks in June and an additional three weeks in October due to low participants in June. The researcher used Survey Monkey to collect survey responses. Survey Monkey is an Internet-based company that allows users to create their own web-based surveys. The researcher inputted the survey information into Survey Monkey and then sent the link to the participants. After the researcher closed the survey, Survey Monkey compiled data.

Data were collected for 245 participants. Data were assessed for missing cases and univariate outliers. Twenty-two participants skipped large portions of the survey and were removed from the dataset. No outliers were found in the dataset. Final data analysis was conducted on 223 participants.

Summary of Findings

A thorough review of the research supplied the evidence on the causal factors related to the overrepresentation of African American males in special education and provided background for which to answer research questions.

The first research question sought to examine how educators perceived causal factors that influenced the overrepresentation rates of African American male students with ED. Overall, general educators (teachers and school administrators) identified environmental factors as the leading contributor of overrepresentation. The group believed that factors such as poverty, family structure and parent education increased the risk of AA males being overrepresented in special education in the category of ED.

Data analysis further revealed that 55% of the study's participants indicated that they had not received training from the district on the characteristics of ED. Based on this data, state departments of education and school districts need to review and analyze

their own practices to address the overrepresentation of AA males special education.

The National Education Association (2007) has asserted that school districts must undertake additional measures that have a positive impact on disproportionality. The following factors are among those most often highlighted as important local approaches for addressing disproportionality:

- Increasing academic language proficiency
- Ensuring quality early childhood opportunities
- Providing early intervening services (EIS)
- Employing a response-to-intervention (RtI) process
- Implementing schoolwide positive behavioral support (PBS) programs
- Increasing access to culturally responsive, school-based mental health services
- Enhancing classroom management skills
- Using authentic, culturally responsive assessment techniques
- Developing culturally responsive teaching skills
- Utilizing culturally appropriate curriculum
- Strengthening parent/family involvement and community partnerships.

The second research question aimed to assess the difference in the teachers' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male students with ED. Data analysis indicated that there were not differences in environmental causal factors, teacher perceptions, and school related variables by position (teacher vs. administrator). Additionally, teachers and administrators were invited to openly respond to the following question: Are there any other reasons that you

believe contribute to overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identified as students with ED that we have overlooked? Teachers and administrators agreed that home and family issues are leading contributors of overrepresentation.

Research question three aimed to determine if there were differences in the educators' and administrators' perceptions of factors related to the overrepresentation of African American male student with ED based on the following demographic characteristics: race (Caucasian vs. other), training on how to refer students to special education services, training to identify ED characteristics, and years of experience. Data analysis determined that mutual views of the African American male student with special needs exist based on the general educators' gender, training on the referral process for special education services, training to identify ED characteristics, and years of experience as a general educator/administrator. A major finding of the study revealed that statistical differences exist on teacher perceptions and school related variables by race (Caucasian vs. other races).

Race played a major role in how teachers and administrators perceived the factors, teacher perception and school related variables, as contributing to the overrepresentation of African American elementary aged male students in ED programs. Similar findings from the study conducted by Gresham (2005) indicated that "non-black and black teachers were often in agreement that a mixture of environmental, teacher perception, and school related variables were causes for black male overrepresentation...but black teachers believed this to be the case at a consistently higher degree"(p. 203). In this study, non-white teachers (17% black; 4% other ethnicities) also agreed at a higher rate that teacher perception of the African American

student's educational success is impacted when the teacher's cultural beliefs and prejudicial expectations are biased. Watkins, Lewis, & Chou, 2001 asserted that black teachers and students are challenged to modify their beliefs and behaviors to conform to the expectations and culture of the White educational system. Therefore, the non-white or black teachers in this study are more likely to have a cultural match to African American students since their life experiences are more similar allowing them to be more sensitive (Taylor, Gunter & Slate, 2001) and agree at a higher rate that African American students' behaviors may be misinterpreted by white teachers which oftentimes leads to special education placement (Green, 2005; Kerr & Tindale, 2004; Hosp & Reschly, 2003).

Non-white teachers also agreed at a higher rate that school related variables, which is defined as teacher training and underrepresentation of cultural knowledge producers, as causes of the overrepresentation of African American male students in ED programs. According to Moore (2002), white teachers reported that they had inadequate training with respect to the behavioral styles and educational needs of African American students and the author also indicated that interviews from white teachers relayed lower expectations of African American students than their black counterparts. Webb-Johnson (2002) indicated that certain aspects of the traditional African American culture (e.g. spirituality, movement, expressive individualism) are less tolerated and receive more negative attention from teachers since the typical classroom setting embodies White cultural values (Alexander, 2010). As the voice of one of these students that represent the Gullah/Geechee culture, I have first-hand experience of how cultural differences are

viewed as an academic deficiency which in turn leads to more African American students being referred to special education.

Implications

The overrepresentation of African Americans in special education, especially males, is an ever-increasing problem in the United States (Irving & Hudley, 2008). The issue of the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education is a persistent concern that has negatively impacted African American male students, their families, school districts, and the field of special education. The Data Accountability Center reported that in 2011 a total of 9.7 million African Americans students enrolled in public education ages 6-21. The 30th Annual Report to Congress indicated that 20.58 per cent of African American students received special education services in the United States. It was also reported that 28.79 % of that population were served as students with an emotional disturbance while the more somber fact is that African American students only account for 15 % of the total student population in the United States.

Based on data from Equity Alliance (2010), school districts throughout the nation report a higher representation of African American males in special education programs than their presence in the general education environment. General educators play a critical role in the rates of referral for African American males being considered for special education programs because they are typically the first source of referral (Taylor, Gunter, & Slate, 2001). In order to unravel the dilemma of the overrepresentation of African Americans males identified as emotionally disabled, it is important to gain the perspectives from general educators. The information on practice and perception

garnered from general educators, the primary source for referrals of African American males, will inform pre-service and in-service development.

Data analysis further revealed that 55% of the study's participants indicated that they had not received training from the district on the characteristics of ED. Based on this data, state departments of education and school districts need to review and analyze their own professional development practices to address the overrepresentation of AA males special education. The ultimate goal is to ensure that AA males are more contributing members to the society at large and this data speaks on how to accomplish this goal. Federal, state, and district personnel may consider recommendations from the data of this study to influence professional development, support the development of policy, and address the need for a culturally responsive pedagogy so that school districts and the field of special education can be more proactive at attacking the problem of the overrepresentation of African American males.

Participants of the study also provided their opinion on other contributors of overrepresentation. Eight teachers noted differences and discrimination towards African Americans and males (e.g., young African American males are often treated to a different standard, boys are more aggressive than girls so they stand out more, African American males are misunderstood...they feel that they are 'targeted', I believe this cultural and language barrier that is dominant over the African American culture, etc.). These statements provide evidence that many African American males are placed in special education programs due to subjective criteria. Numerous research conducted by Steele (1997) has examined the damage of a stereotype for African-American males in their academic settings. An examination of open responses from this study reveal that teachers

often adopt a stereotype that AA males are intellectually inferior, threatening, and aggressive which results in the devalued efforts of the teacher to educate the students. Steele (1997) asserted that the devalued efforts displayed by the teacher ultimately lead to the AA male student selectively devaluing education. Steele (1997) theorizes that the AA male does not begin school in a state of duress and discontent but it is a direct result of the anxiety and aversion developed from existing stereotypes within their educational environment. In order to alleviate the pressures faced by both the teacher and the AA male student in the educational arena, educational settings must be culturally designed to fit the needs of all students with respect that all students can and will achieve at high levels.

Eight teachers simply indicated that the issues of overrepresentation is not due to race (e.g., as for my school, I believe that African American males are not ‘overrepresented’, color of the skin has nothing to with it, some of the circumstances fit any ethnic group...this survey is unfair and angers me, perhaps it is a true representation and has nothing to with race, etc.). These statements outline how educators deny the fact that educational iniquity does exist for AA males which may continue to exhaust a district’s efforts to address the problem of overrepresentation. Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Koehler, Henderson, Wu (2006) implicated that the “the apparent unwillingness or inability on the part of many White educators to confront the inescapable facts of racial disparity in education may itself contribute to the continued inability to effectively address those problems” (p. 1452). Data from this study does indicate that teachers do not perceive race as an underlying cause of overrepresentation. None of the teachers and administrators directly noted racism as a contributor to the overrepresentation of African

American males in special education but it is apparent in the statements indicating that African American parents were rarely involved in their child's academic settings, that they had poor skill sets when it came to disciplining their children, and their home environments were poorly developed to raise their children. These statements are an example of implicit racism as the teachers did not mention any other ethnic groups. In order to end the negative effects of racial disparity that continues to permeate beneath the surface of school settings, educational systems must bluntly confront it by reforming current systems so that the focus is on the development of cultural competency skills for all educators.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study presented research on how African American male students with special needs are perceived within their educational environment by elementary school principals, assistant principals, and general education teachers in one school district in South Carolina. To extend this scope of research, recommendations are necessary for future research.

1. Demographically, this study was based on responses from the majority of white and female participants from elementary general education settings. Considering the fact that non-white participants agreed with causal factors at higher rates, examining the African American special education teacher perspectives of teaching K-12 African American students with special needs would provide more insight on determining the best cultural fit for African American males who are facing behavioral and social-emotional challenges in their school environment.

2. This study is limited to African American males and cannot be generalized to other ethnic groups or gender. A study relevant to culturally and linguistically diverse student would add a wealth of knowledge and would address a diverse and growing Hispanic population. There is a growing population of Hispanic families in many regions of the United States and being proactive would result in attacking the problem of the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students categorized as emotionally disturbed.
3. This research should be extended across South Carolina. Even though the demographics of this district is very diverse, this study is limited to a localized population in Charleston County, South Carolina and should be expanded to other districts for the purpose of data analysis.
4. A mixed methods study conducted as a follow-up to this quantitative study would yield more detailed information and a better understanding of general educators' perceptions about the overrepresentation of African American males receiving special education services (Creswell, 2012).

Conclusion

As noted in Chapter One, the medical definition of cascade means “a molecular, biochemical, or physiological process occurring in a succession of stages each of which is closely related to or depends on the output of the previous stage” (American Heritage Dictionary, n.d.). The issue of the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education is similar to the series in a cascade because it is a persistent and long-standing concern that has negatively impacted African American students, their families, school districts, the field of special education, and ultimately, the nation as a whole (Patton,

1998; Dunn, 1968). The purpose of this study was to primarily identify and analyze the current perceptions of educational leaders about factors that contribute to some of the reasons for the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American males identified as emotionally disabled in special education programs. The study provided a view of general educators' perceptions in one localized school district. The Gresham Survey (2005) addressed causal factors related to the problem of overrepresentation of African American elementary aged males in ED programs. The causal factors were environment, teacher perception, and school related variables because the research literature on factors for the overrepresentation of elementary aged black males identified as students with ED suggested a causal relationship between the risk factors and student representation in classrooms for students with ED (Gresham, 2005).

In order to address the problem of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education, educators must first acknowledge their own biases. The Gresham Survey was used to quantitatively assess the perceptions of general educators about the overrepresentation of elementary aged African American males identified as having an ED under the IDEA. The findings of this study suggest that subjective criteria may be used in categorizing African American males as ED. The long-term effects of overrepresentation should not be overlooked. African American males will continue to not be able to compete in this global economy if not given the chance of being educated in general education settings which in turn will increase many students being victims of the "school to prison pipeline". The school to prison pipeline is a national dilemma that is affecting many African American male students with behavioral concerns in which they are pushed out of their school settings and into the juvenile or criminal justice

system. Zero tolerance policies exacerbate this dilemma and are costing taxpayers millions of dollars keeping students in prison rather than educating them to become successful citizens.

The *Gresham Survey* was found to be useful in examining the perceptions of educators on the causal factors related to the overrepresentation of African Americans who are categorized as ED. The survey has proven useful in capturing the biases that educators experience when educating AA males. State departments and school districts may find this instrument useful in establishing professional development for general educators relating to the causal factors of the overrepresentation of African American males in special education and encourage the use of a culturally responsive assessment and practices for African American students with behavioral and learning challenges.

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